



L34-2

L34-2 (3)

Larsson \$2.75

Ships in the river

L34-2 (3)

## Keep Your Card in This Pocket

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for two weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on this card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.



**Public Library**  
**Kansas City, Mo.**

**Keep Your Card in This Pocket**



KANSAS CITY, MO. PUBLIC LIBRARY



0 0001 0320962 3

K U  
S A S  
M O

370-11-392

06-11-67

10-11-67

11-11-67

12-11-67

1-11-68

2-11-68

3-11-68

4-11-68

5-11-68

6-11-68

7-11-68

8-11-68

9-11-68

10-11-68

11-11-68

12-11-68

1-11-69

2-11-69





*SHIPS IN THE RIVER*

 *by Gösta Larsson*

OUR DAILY BREAD

FATHERLAND, FAREWELL!

THE ORDEAL OF THE FALCON

REVOLT IN ARCADIA

SHIPS IN THE RIVER



*Translation*

PASSION AND THE SWORD

G Ö S T A L A R S S O N

---

SHIPS  
IN THE  
RIVER

---

*Whittlesey House*

McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

New York

London

SHIPS IN THE RIVER  
Copyright, 1946, by GÖSTA LARSSON

All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without permission of the publisher.

Acknowledgments to publishers of songs quoted in this volume:

*Let Me Call You Sweetheart.* Copyright 1910 by Leo Friedman. Copyright renewed. By permission Paull-Pioneer Music Corp. and Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc.

*Hinky Dinky Parlez-Vous.* Used by permission of the copyright owner, Jerry Vogel Music Co.

*This book is produced in full compliance with the government's regulations for conserving paper and other essential materials.*

*First Printing*

PUBLISHED BY WHITTLESEY HOUSE  
A division of the McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

*Printed in the United States of America*

*To my father and mother*

*There be many shapes of mystery;  
And many things God makes to be,  
    Past hope or fear.  
And the end men looked for cometh not,  
And a path is there where no man thought.  
    So hath it fallen here.*

EURIPIDES

*The real phenomena of life  
infinitely transcend human science.*

SIR WILLIAM THOMSON

# ❧ 1 ❧

A BRISK NORTHEASTER HAD CHASED THE NIGHT'S FOG from New York's harbor. Now April sun flashed from a blue morning sky, and was reflected with blinding glitter by the whitecapped bay. Steam puffs from chugging tugboats were like handfuls of cotton scattered in the air. Whistles hooted. From out at sea came the full-throated call of a ship.

Grabbing at my hat to keep it from being blown across Battery Wall, I nearly stumbled over the outstretched legs of a couple of bums sitting lazily on a bench while watching the sea out in front of them. And this harbor was indeed something to look at, both for an idling vagabond and a philosophy instructor on his day off. I used to come here at least once a year in the spring, to look and listen and to smell the salt sea air—and also to recall days when with steel hook in hand I made my living on ships that entered this port.

Here a Staten Island ferry came ponderously through the choppy sea, signaling sharply to a harassed tug with a string of lighters in tow. Further out, past Governors Island and Buttermilk Channel, the sun washed down upon noisy ship-yards of the Atlantic Basin and the Erie. The harbor swarmed

with craft, with ferries, barges, tugboats, and floating hoists. Screaming gulls swooped in the sunlight.

Another loud bellowing was heard from far off, and squinting my eyes against the sun I saw a smoke-belching freighter hove into view. I watched her with some of my old professional interest. Arriving by one of the two hundred steamship routes that converge on New York harbor, the ship had most likely reached the coast during the night, first sighting Fire Island beacon and eventually picking up a pilot at Sandy Hook. Then, as the morning fog cleared, she had navigated into the forty-foot Ambrose Channel dredged through treacherous sand shoals in Lower Bay. Now with her pilot in command she reached Upper Bay and would probably push into the Hudson to tie up, perhaps at one of the very Chelsea piers where I used to work—where Jan and I used to work, I should say. For I can never watch a freighter entering port without remembering that weatherbeaten Bohemian and the wind-driven girl he took compassion on when she needed his help—the slim blonde girl he then fell in love with because of her beauty, and perhaps also because of his own loneliness here in a foreign land.

The ship was steaming closer, a large transatlantic freighter, loaded well down to the Plimsoll marks. But ships, like men, fare best when loaded to full capacity. Too little load, or too much, is equally dangerous in rough seas.

The freighter nosed into the Hudson as I thought she would, and I decided to follow her in a brisk walk along West Street. Dodging the traffic I speculated on what kind of freight she might have in her holds. Coffee from Guatemala, perhaps; raw silk, cocoa beans, or tin. Or surely rubber, for Jan and I used to unload a lot of that. Every ship brought it—rubber from the steaming plantations of the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch Indies, or tapped by lonely *seringueros* in the cruel rubber country of the Amazon.

Or maybe copper from Chile. This recalled the time when



our pal Mike got his foot crushed by a falling copper bar as we worked on a barge. That accident made me remember how Jan fell down from a ship's deck once and was rushed away in an ambulance. And what a jolt that gave to his erratic beloved one, she with the golden hair!

Jan and his girl! . . . Striding along clamorous West Street was like walking in among the memories of people I once knew well. In the foreground is Jan. I can see him now as if I had parted with him yesterday, a frank hearty fellow with a weatherbeaten face and a firm handclasp. I remember how we worked aboard ships in early summer dawns when mist softened the outlines of piers and hulks; or when autumn rains lashed the river; or on spring days with a high clear sky, winches chugging in clouds of white steam, and cargo drafts shooting up and down through hatchways.

But if I should tell about Jan I must go back still further in time. For that striking girl he met, and with whom he fell in love—she was my mother's youngest sister of whom I had a glimpse when a boy.

Memories crowd upon me.

I remember the idyllic town where I was born and where I spent the happy years of my childhood, a small town on Norway's rocky coast swept by trumpeting winds from the Greenland sea.

My father was a teacher, an austere, scholarly man. Mother was much younger than he, and as sweet as she was beautiful. I remember her smiling eyes and mass of chestnut-colored hair. She had four sisters. Three of them resembled mother. Only the youngest was different. She was blonde, a gay and vivacious girl unlike the others in every respect.

I grew up in that sea town, then father sent me to college in Oslo to become a teacher like himself. I was now to enter the University, but rebelled. I longed to see the world before I settled down. Father admonished me, and mother begged

me to stay. But to no avail. When father refused to aid me with money I signed on a ship as deck hand, and one fine morning the captain weighed anchor and headed for the sea.

This was only to be a short trip. A year or so, then I would be back again, so I had promised my parents. Little did I know, as the ship steamed out of the fjord, that five, ten and fifteen years would pass, and I would still be a stranger to my native land. Little did I know that my mother would pass away during my absence; and least of all could I have foreseen that the day would come when barbarians would invade Norway, and that violence and war would ravage the town where I had spent my happy boyhood years.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO BE BRIEF WHEN SO MANY STORIES DEMAND to be told. Here I only wish to explain how I came to America and met Jan and my mother's youngest sister, that unique member of the family.

After having left Norway I had an adventurous voyage and at last found myself in South Africa. I stayed there a year, but as I look back it seems as though I had remained there a lifetime. So much did I see. So many things happened. Yet I shall not speak of that strange African land. It almost got the best of me. And it seems unreal now that I was the lean lonely boy who found refuge in a miner's hut—that it was I who took part in the many scenes which now flow through my mind.

I wanted to leave that accursed Africa, but was too proud to return to Norway and admit my defeat. It was then I remembered my mother's sister who was living in America. I wrote to her, and she replied warmly, telling me that she longed to see me and would count the days until I arrived.

The letter reached me in Capetown. Shortly after, a freighter from India cast anchor inside the bay, and I was given the chance to work for my passage to America. We left a few days later, and I saw the African continent disappear on our starboard side.

The ship reached Philadelphia shortly after the Christmas holidays, and this added to the solemn mood with which I

put foot on American soil. A few hours later I sat in a train speeding toward New York. A few hours more and we arrived at Pennsylvania Station.

It snowed as I came out in the street. A passerby told me how to find the address I was looking for, but deeply puzzled I walked into that neighborhood, noisy with thunder of Elevated trains overhead. And on reaching the house I felt that something must be wrong. Could my mother's beautiful sister really be living in this tumbledown place? I turned doubtfully to a shabby woman who stepped out of the dim hallway, with a dog on a leash. She repeated my aunt's name. Yes, she thought the one I was looking for lived on the upper floor.

I entered the hall and climbed the rickety stairs. It could not be, I thought, with a picture of our Norwegian home at the back of my mind. She could not be living here. I climbed another flight. On the third floor a pale blue light oozed through a frosted window, and bending down I read my aunt's name, written on a small piece of paper tacked to the door: *Karen Askvig*. Under that was written: *Jan Kapras*. Had she remarried? I wondered, as I hesitatingly knocked.

A moment later someone approached the door from the inside, and a shadow fell on the glass. A key rattled in the lock, the door was pulled open, and the slender figure of a woman stood outlined against the doleful light from a gas jet, her blonde hair like finespun gold, her features indistinct in the gloom.

Still with her hand on the knob she stood silent, scrutinizing my face on which the gaslight fell. She seemed startled at my rumpled appearance. Perhaps she still thought of me as the little fair-haired boy she had seen on her visit to Norway many years ago.

At a sound from inside the flat she turned her head, and the gaslight illuminated her features. And now it was my turn to start, for she was so unlike that beautiful girl I remembered

from my childhood. Through my mind flashed a picture of how she looked the time I first saw her. I was playing with some other children under the pine trees outside our house when presently we heard the unfamiliar noise of an automobile puffing its way up the steep climb of the road. It came to a stop in front of our house, and out stepped a young woman so elegant as to make us round-eyed children exclaim: Ah! and Oh!

And surely none of us had ever before seen such a marvelous person. She was very slim. Her full bosom was white as snow among the flurry of lace frills, and her hair a wealth of golden curls under a sweeping large hat.

While old taxi driver Petersen carried her baggage out of the car this resplendent girl glanced about her, at our house, the garden and us children standing open-mouthed under the pines. With a sudden cry she ran over to us, brushed the other children aside, bent down and cried: "You are my nephew! You are my own flesh and blood!"

I squirmed with embarrassment as she prolonged her dramatic greeting, holding me to her bosom while uttering loud cries and calling me pet names I knew I would never be able to live down among my playmates. They were even now watching this spectacle with expressions of mixed envy and glee.

My mother saved me as she flung open the door to our house and appeared on the doorstep. At the sight of her, Aunt Karen dropped me as carelessly as though I had ceased to exist, and instead ran to my mother and embraced her and once more threw herself into a rhapsodic outburst of greeting.

And was this the Aunt Karen who now stood before me here in this melancholy gaslight! I did not recognize her. Yet, in some ways she had not changed at all. She was still slim and of girlish figure. She was still snowy-bosomed, and her fair hair was still golden.

Only her face had changed. I remembered her as a round-cheeked girl with soft apple blossom skin on which time and care had not yet drawn a single line. But the woman in this gaslight—she had the face of one who has fought bitter struggles in the realm of the spirit. And yet she was beautiful, perhaps even more beautiful than that untried and spoiled girl of long ago. Her pale features were chiseled, and her blue eyes deep-set and shadowed. But she looked tense as if under a great strain.

She uttered a cry, stretched out her arms and embraced me. The dramatic gestures were those of years ago, yet I felt that a real emotion possessed her. "My own flesh and blood!" she cried. But then her arms dropped to her sides, and she seemed to retreat within herself in some unaccountable hostility.

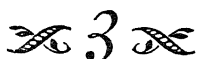
On hearing someone come from an inner room, I looked up and saw an angular man with a weathered face and kind eyes. He had a mass of unruly black hair. He was a young man, I saw, as he came across the floor and shook my hand.

"This is Jan," my aunt said shortly, then stood nervously aside.

"Come in," said Jan, speaking with a Slavic accent. "We've been waiting for you. Saw in the papers that your ship docked."

I entered the kitchen which was cluttered with much useless furniture, but scrubbed and clean. I wondered about Aunt Karen's strange behavior. She kept secretly watching me, and again I felt sharp hostility go out from her. Still the letter she had written me had overflowed with warmth.

Jan was friendly and natural. Now all three of us went into a small inner room. Jan asked me questions about the voyage. Karen hardly said a word, but sat nervous and pale-faced in a corner. I was bewildered and didn't know what to make of it all. From time to time a train roared by the windows, and we were forced to stop talking and wait until the noise had died away down the avenue.



WHEN I WOKE THE NEXT MORNING GRAY DAYLIGHT DRIB-  
bled into the room. The wind was moaning out-  
side. The house shook as a train hurtled by out on  
the Elevated tracks.

Looking around I saw some good pieces of furniture that  
seemed to have come from a much more prosperous home.  
Incongruously mixed with these were numerous cheap prints,  
terra-cotta figures and other objects littering walls and shelves.

I heard someone stir in the other room, and Aunt Karen  
appeared in the door. As soon as she spoke I sensed the same  
hostility in her as on the previous night. Jan had gone down  
to the docks, she told me. He would be back at around noon.

After some floundering she timidly began to ask questions  
about my mother and our home in Norway. She listened to  
my answers in silence, her eyes staring moodily out into the  
uncompromising winter dawn.

Then suddenly she whirled around and left me, as if too  
wrought up to hear any more.

Her questions turned my thoughts on Norway, and while  
I absently listened to the train clattering by the windows mem-  
ories from my childhood came to me with new meaning and

clarity. Again I remembered how mother's resplendent sister arrived at our house on her return from America. But now I also recalled that mother and father had been very disturbed during the next few days. There was that conversation I overheard as I came unexpectedly into father's study one night. "She says she stood on top of the stairs with a lamp in her hand," mother was saying. "She got an attack and dropped the lamp."

"You believe that?" father asked, with arched brows.

"She says that's why the house burned down."

Father was silent for a moment. Then he asked: "Did she have such attacks when she was little?"

"Yes, sometimes," mother replied, subdued. "And she would get hysteric when she couldn't have her own way."

At this point father noticed me standing by the door and the talk ceased. But from a word here and there the following days I learned that mother's beautiful sister had caused the loss of two homes. I admit I didn't feel too bad about it. As far as I was concerned it all summed up to a picture of Aunt Karen in America, standing on a stair landing with a lighted lamp in her hand, then shrieking as she fell.

These recollections came to me with hardly any orderly sequence. Presently a tall broad-shouldered and dark-haired man appears on the scene back in my childhood's Norway. He is Bjorn, the husband of Aunt Karen. I always think of him as Jack London, for he looked as London did in his prime, before evil days fell upon him, a handsome, vigorous man. Karen had met him in America, but Uncle Bjorn was the son of a wealthy farmer in another part of Norway, the rich Gudbrandsdalen district in the interior.

The pictures took on added meaning now, and the memories flowed together and formed long sequences which stood out with remarkable clarity. Beautiful Aunt Karen swept like a cyclone through the staid atmosphere of my scholarly home.



I remember how she fascinated me, this overwhelming girl with skin as white and soft as apple blossoms in spring. She must have been very young at the time. She liked to strike dramatic poses, with one little bejeweled hand at her slender waist, one white arm raised in the air, and her head thrown back, while she sang snatches from *The Merry Widow*, with many a frivolous dance step and her eyes bright.

And that was something for the neighbors! They nodded and they whispered and peeped forth from behind the window curtains with eyes shining from eager expectation of scandal. Father withdrew in cold reserve to his study. Mother looked more and more unhappy by the day.

Now there is a quarrel. Mother anxiously shuts the windows as Bjorn bangs his fist against the table top, his thick black hair tumbling over his brow. "I am no shopkeeper!" he thunders to Karen. "By God, no! I've grown up on a farm, and it is back to a farm I'll go."

Karen defies him. She is shouting hard words that seem horrible coming from her pretty red lips. Slim and imperious and her eyes flashing she tells Uncle Bjorn that if such is the case he will have to choose between her and his "dung farm."

Bjorn pleads with her. "Two homes I have given you already," he says, reaching for her hand. "Please, listen to me this once. Can you really leave me so easily? You must have a heart of stone. Have I not given you proof that I love you?"

"It's me or the farm," she replies coldly, withdrawing her hand.

He heaves a deep sigh and slowly steps to the window, staring out into the sunny garden where a bumblebee zooms among the flowers.

## ✂ 4 ✂

A GUST OF WIND OUT ON THE ELEVATED TRACKS BROUGHT me back to the present. Karen was busy in the kitchen. Then at a cautious knocking on the outside door she went and quickly turned the key. I heard a man's coarse voice.

"Hello, kid," he rumbled. "How's tricks?"

"Kelly!" she exclaimed. With some whispering and a shuffle of feet the two of them moved out in the hall. A moment later Karen came into the kitchen alone, and through the half-drawn curtain I saw her step to a closet where she concealed a small object.

The hoarse bellowing from a snowbound ship rolled in from the sea. I was thinking of Jan, and that it must be icy cold at the docks. The snow was falling outside. White flakes covered the rusty Elevated and piled up a high drift on the window sill. The room was without sound. On the bureau dim lights glowed beside a little colored statue of Christ.

Presently Karen came into the room. It was so dark now that I could hardly see her face, but I at once sensed some difference in her. She was theatrical and loud. A whiff of whisky told me what was wrong with her. .

My Aunt Karen was both a disillusion and a mystery to me.

When she went back to the kitchen I let my thoughts return to Norway, for I was curious to know what had happened to Karen and Uncle Bjorn after that stormy scene in father's study. And what did uncle mean when he shouted that he was no shopkeeper? Did Karen want him to open shop? It seemed absurd. Imagine dynamic and colorful Jack London standing behind a shop counter, smirking at gossipy Madame Andersen and weighing up a quarter of a pound of butter for her!

But that was exactly what Karen had planned, only on a much larger scale, of course, for she did everything on a grand scale, with flamboyant gestures, and her head thrown dramatically back.

Young Jack would start a shop in our town. He told mother about it one day while he was playing with me in our garden and had lifted me up on his powerful shoulders so that I should be able to reach a certain red apple that tempted me among the branches of a tree. "She's gotten the idea of starting an American store here in town," he said to mother whose face looked very thoughtful in the sunshine. "She wants me to do it in big style."

"You think it will be a success?" mother asked quietly.

"Success!" Jack repeated with a peculiar laugh. "Louise . . . I don't know. But I'll try. To make it a go between Karen and me is all I hope for in this life."

"What does your father say? Will he give you the money?"

"Father! . . . He hates her. He refuses to give me one single *ore*."

"I don't blame him," mother sighed. "She has not brought you much happiness. She has been a great expense."

"It isn't so much the money father thinks of. He wants to see me happy, that's all. And he wants me to come home and run the farm for him. He's not getting any younger, you know. He can't very well ask my sisters to do a man's work."

"So what will you do?" mother asked after a long pause.

"Oh—I will get the money from him. I'll start shop and try once more. I don't know what I'd do if I should ever lose Karen."

"You love her that much?" mother said softly.

"Do you have to ask me?" he said. "Louise, I've put up with a great deal, and I can stand as much as any man, I should think. But if I lost Karen I would want to hide away somewhere and put an end to myself."

My revery was interrupted as Jan came home for lunch. He stamped into the kitchen, then came into my room, a heavy paper bag of groceries in his arms. He was covered with snow, and his face was stiff from the cold which held the river in an ice-locked grip.

"Some weather out," he grinned, with a nod at the windows. Then, indicating the grocery bag: "I got a few things at the store. Let's have a bite to eat now."

Here Karen edged into the room, and at the sight of her flushed face Jan grew suddenly grave. "Come out in the kitchen," he said. "I want to tell you something."

She followed him. And I heard him remonstrate with her. "Why did you do it?" he said with deep reproach. "You've promised me. Now, don't go and spoil everything."

"Was feeling bad," she answered sullenly. "I can't help it."

"Where's the bottle?"

"Never mind. You leave it alone."

"You think so . . ." He searched the kitchen and looked in every nook and corner. Finally he found the bottle and poured its contents into the sink, in spite of Karen's protests. She was sobbing now. Jan spoke gently to her. "It will pass," he said. "Buck up and be a good girl."

He looked both solemn and sad as he came back into my room. "Don't mind her," he whispered. "She'll be all right."

Standing by the window he looked out into the snow as if pondering a weighty problem. But passing his hand across his brow, he dismissed these thoughts from his mind. Turning to me he said he would have to hurry and eat because he must be back in the Shape at one o'clock.

"The Shape?" I repeated. "What is that?"

"Oh," he said, with a brief smile, "that's what they call us fellows standing around the dock gate, looking for a job."

We ate our lunch. Now and then Jan spoke to Karen in a hushed voice. Then he reached for his cap. "Be good now," he said. "Everything will be okay, you'll see." He gave me a nod. "See you tonight." And he set out for the docks again.

I SPENT THE AFTERNOON TRYING TO REMEMBER WHAT HAD happened to that American store of great style, which beautiful Karen forced on her young husband. My mind was confused at this stage, because Bjorn had concealed his feelings so skillfully. My childish eyes had recorded only the bright pictures of Bjorn laughing and romping about with me on his broad back, of him joking with mother, or engrossed in long discussions with father who never grew tired of his vivid accounts of America.

I remember Bjorn so well because he looked different from other people. In those days Norwegian men wore funny clothes with suspenders and vests and high starched collars, and they always kept their jackets on, even on a hot summer day.

Not so goodly young Bjorn. Off went his jacket, for so he had learned in America. Not for him a vest with a ridiculous strap in the back. Bjorn liked to be free and easy in a roomy pair of slacks with a smart belt, and soft-collared shirt and flowing tie. He always rolled up his sleeves as if expecting to pitch in and lend a hand with some work. He rumbled his black hair as he talked and told stories. He laughed, his teeth flashed. We all loved young Bjorn!

But what about Karen and the American store?

Well, that tale became famous back home. And that store didn't develop by any small degrees, for Bjorn knew how to get things done in a jiffy.

I saw the store only once, so my memory of it is sharp and clear and not confused by change. It was located in the very center of our town, to attract the most favorable trade. Within the store were many departments, each with one particular kind of merchandise, for so Karen said they did it in America. But it was the outside of the store which fascinated me most. Around windows as well as store entrance was built thick plate glass framed with shining aluminum, and the glass bore red-lettered legends telling of the wonders to be found within. There were rows of electric lights, red, green and blue, which blinked and made you believe they were running endlessly in circles. That, too, was of Karen's design. Something she had learned in America, no doubt. On the opening day Karen was photographed in front of the store, standing with her small gloved hand to her side, elegant in her largest hat, and pulling up her skirt so that her shapely legs would show. And as the photographers snapped her she threw back her head and smiled.

The street was full of people, of course, for nothing like this had ever been seen in our town before. "Something for the damn yokels to stare at," Karen said haughtily to my mother who had retreated to the back of the store. Bjorn sat on an upturned crate, nervously rubbing his hands.

The crowds stared indeed. But they did more than that. They broke into the store *en masse* as the doors were opened. Karen was triumphant. She walked around the place and shocked them all, by smoking long Turkish cigarettes, while Bjorn and his assistant tried to serve the goggle-eyed customers.

After an hour or so he came to the back of the store where mother and I were sitting in a smell of dried prunes, salted

nerring and other spicy foods. He had a wild look in his eyes. "So help me God," he groaned, "I've never seen so many copper pennies in my life!"

"Copper pennies?" mother repeated.

"That's what I said. That's all they want. Just a pennyworth of stuff so they can ogle Karen and me. The devil take them! Don't know how long I'll be able to stand all this."

If Bjorn could only have known how very soon these worries of his would be over! The Saga of the American store was brief. The finale came when Bjorn was away on a short business trip to Oslo.

And now into the story enters another character. That is *Frue* Axelsen. I never saw her, so I cannot describe her, but she was the divorced wife of an Army officer, and when the gossips of our town said *divorced* they said the worst that could possibly be said about her.

When Bjorn left for Oslo Karen went on a spree and staged a great party for *Frue* Axelsen and her friends. They drank up all the wines and liquors in the store, and when customers came and interrupted the bacchanal Karen shouted "yokels" and "fools" at them, chased them out of the store and locked the door.

So that was that. There were no colored electric lights blinking a greeting above the entrance when Bjorn came back from Oslo one windy October night.

The rest is rather obscure in my mind. There were several fierce clashes in my father's study, and Bjorn paced the floor, unshaven and his face dark. Mother wept. Only Karen was as arrogant as ever.

Then I remember two young women coming to our house. They are Bjorn's sisters. They sit on the sofa before mother and look angry and speak harsh words.

But mother talks gently. "God is my witness," she says. "I love your brother as though he were my own. I sometimes



think it would have been better if Karen had never been born."

Then the two sisters fall to weeping. They put their hands before their faces, and their bodies shake with sobs. Mother weeps too. It is all very sad in our house these days, and the raw October blast comes tearing in from the sea. And there's young Bjorn sitting on a rock, staring and staring across the rough waves, and he doesn't even hear that I speak to him.

But one day he pulls himself together. When he comes to our house he is clean-shaved and has a new hair cut, and has put on a fresh white shirt.

"Nothing but to try again," he says to my parents, squaring his broad shoulders as he speaks.

Father drops the book on his knee and looks up at Bjorn.

"Try . . . again?" mother says. She has grown so pale and red-eyed of late.

"I think I have it in me," says goodly young Bjorn. "Yes, I do believe I've another go in me yet."

And now he tells my parents of his plans. Karen and he cannot possibly stay here in Norway, for the scandal is too terrific. So he will break up home once more and sell the furniture. That will give him money for a ticket to America. There is nothing more to expect from his father, of course. But after he has gotten over there he will save his money to send for Karen, and they will make another start.

When Bjorn finished talking my mother broke into tears. Father rose from his chair, looking so grim that I became afraid and slipped out of the room.

And so Bjorn left us. The cold autumn rains fell, and the sea thundered against the rocks. I remember that I went with mother and father in our buggy to a place in town where Bjorn's furniture was stored in a backyard, for he had not been able to sell more than a small part of it. A piece of broken canvas covered the lot. Rain and snow were spoiling the beautiful mahogany.

Weeks passed, and we never received word from Bjorn. Karen would stand for hours at the window, staring into the whirling snow. Months passed and spring came, yet never a word from Bjorn. Summer came and summer went. Once more cold October winds swept in from the leaden-gray sea. When Karen had waited a year she borrowed money from my father and left for America to see if she could not find her young husband again.

## ❧ 6 ❧

KAREN NEVER DID FIND HER HANDSOME HUSBAND.  
In the year that followed the postman delivered several America letters to our house from her, and each time mother became very upset. She and father would talk in the study. But I only caught a few disjointed sentences and could not make much sense of what I heard.

"She does seem to miss him terribly," mother said. "I think she has a good heart after all."

"She?" father repeated ironically. "Is it her heart or her vanity that suffers?"

Mother bit her lips. Her eyes filled with tears. "Poor Karen," she murmured. "She did not make her own nature."

"That much I'll concede," father said gravely. "She is a wind-driven bird."

No, we never heard from Bjorn again, and as the years passed his very name became a legend. I would think of him when the winter storms howled along the coast, and I always remembered how he sat on that rock, staring across the sea.

And we did not hear much from Karen either. A year or two would pass, then a letter with an American stamp would come. Mother did not weep now. She only looked thoughtful. "Karen seems to be doing well," she would say to father as

she handed him the letter. He read it carefully, then returned it to mother without a word, his hand absently smoothing the sheaf of papers on his knees.

The years passed.

And now I was here in this little cluttered waterside flat which was the home of the once so arrogant Karen. What, I wondered, had become of young Bjorn?

The loud noise of an Elevated train jolted me out of my thoughts. I had not seen Karen since Jan left for the docks at noon. She was most likely sleeping herself sober in her small room behind the kitchen.

It was late in the afternoon. The dim lights glowed beside the figure of Christ. A moaning wind outside told that a storm was blowing up. Fine-grained snow whipped the window-panes.

An hour later I heard Jan's footsteps on the stairs as he returned from the docks. He stamped the snow off his boots and came into my room and switched on the light. "Boy, it's getting tough out," he said, rubbing his hands. "Good to be home."

While he was talking Karen appeared in the door. She pushed Jan aside and showed me something she held in her hand, a dusty porcelain vase covered with gilt ornaments. "Look!" she cried indignantly. "See what he brings home! God Almighty! Haven't we got enough junk already!"

Jan grinned sheepishly, took the vase from her and appealed to my judgment. "It's a good vase," he said. "See all those ornaments."

"You make me sick," Karen cried. "Every time you come home you bring some junk with you."

Now I understood why the room was so cluttered. The vase was a poor gilded thing, but I could not disappoint Jan. "It is nice," I said. "Really fine."

He turned triumphantly to Karen. "You hear that! Didn't I tell you."

She looked desperate. She moaned, put her hands to her forehead and stalked out of the room.

Jan chuckled. "I'm glad you like those antiques," he said. "Some time I'll take you over to the store down on the avenue. Boy, they've got things there."

**I**DLING AROUND THE HOUSE MADE ME RESTLESS. I LONGED TO go to work. "Can't I get something at the docks?" I asked Jan one night.

"It's hard going there," he said. "You ought to get yourself a nice office job instead."

"My English is not good enough."

"Well, I guess that's true."

"I think I must start at the docks," I insisted.

This upset Karen no end. Never, she declared, as long as she could help it would *her* nephew work as a common longshoreman. The humiliation! Her own flesh and blood! And what would the neighbors say?

But after she had gone into her room Jan and I talked things over. "I guess I can get you a job," he said. "I'll speak to the Stevedore."

He kept his promise. And one morning shortly before eight o'clock I followed him down to the docks, equipped with a pair of work gloves, and a longshoreman's steel hook tucked professionally under my belt on the left side, as Jan had instructed me.

It was still half dark, and the sky gray with snow, as we reached the waterfront. We met a lot of other longshoremen,

burly figures in caps and leather jackets or heavy old overcoats with the collars turned up. "Hey, Jan," they called gruffly. "How's the boy?"

"Hello, Bill! Hello, Mac! Cold enough for you?"

"Plenty. Let's see what's doin' over at the pier today."

An icy wind swept in from the Hudson. Two or three hundred men had already gathered in the Shape, and we joined them and stood in a great semicircle around the dock gates, all of us shivering in the cold. The men grouped themselves according to nationality and race so that the Stevedore might more easily find his gangs. At one side of the gate stood the colored men, opposite them the Italians, Lithuanians, Poles and others, and at the apex of the circle the Scandinavians and the Irish.

Jan joined his old gang. "You stand by me, Arne," he said. "McGrady will know you."

On looking around in the dim morning light I saw more and more men coming from all directions to join the Shape. There were about four hundred fellows in the line now. In front of us, behind the high concrete wall along the river edge, the tall spars of the S.S. *Manahawskin* rose like black bayonets stabbing at the lowering sky. Behind us West Street had wakened to life, and heavy trucks rumbled along. Drays and carts rattled across the cobblestones and crowded near the gates to get the *Manahawskin's* freight. Horses neighed. Drivers cracked their whips. A ship groaned dully out at sea.

Still more dock hands flocked to the Shape, plodding through the snow and stamping their feet to keep warm. The men were standing in groups of about ten, each group a gang—hold gang, sailor gang or dock gang. On the fringe of the Shape were a few hundred extras and so-called *shenangoes*—men, I later learned, given work only when there was a rush at the dock and the regular gangs could not handle all the freight. These men had an anxious and beaten look, and I heard a couple of them discuss the chance of being picked

by the Stevedore for a day's work. "By Jesus, I don't know what I'll do," said one old Irishman whom the others called Humpy. "I ain't been picked for over a week now."

Someone called a warning: "Shut up! McGrady!" And sudden silence fell on the men.

Jan shoved his elbow into my side: "McGrady!"

A tough individual emerged from the gloom of the pier shed and stepped briskly into the center of the human circle where every man stood on the alert. McGrady was a hard-faced man of forty, a battered felt hat sailing rakishly on his ear, his cheek bulging with a tobacco quid. He shoved a whistle into his mouth and blew a shrill signal, while glaring angrily at a few late-comers who hurriedly pushed through the crowds.

Knocking his hat onto the back of his head McGrady looked critically around the shaggy line-up. His jaws worked as his flinty eyes bored into one of the groups. "Dock gang number one!" he roared, his voice almost drowned by the din of trucks lumbering by.

Half a dozen men stepped from the Shape and walked up in front of the Stevedore. They were a mixed bunch, short fellows and tall ones, some thick-set, others gangly and lean. Each of them carried a steel hook tucked under the belt.

McGrady chewed his tobacco and scrutinized the men. He did not seem too pleased with them, but let them pass one by one. "Get in," he snorted, jerking his thumb toward the gates. As the men lumbered off a timekeeper made a mark on his list.

A flurry of snow began to fall. McGrady straddled his legs and squirted a brown jet of tobacco juice at the ground. A giant truck thundered past the Shape.

I glanced at Jan, an angular figure among the burly members of his gang, and his sober expression told me that this "shaping up" was most important to him. It wouldn't do to lose favor with McGrady. And the other men also were at-



tentive and tense. I had never before seen such looks in men's eyes. They were all begging for a chance, were all mutely appealing for a day's work. "McGrady—you know me," one pair of eyes seemed to say. They belonged to a stout, middle-aged Irishman. And—"Look here, I am a strong and willing guy," another man tried to put across, a small-grown Italian, stretching himself and trying to look taller and huskier than God had made him. "McGrady," said the eyes of another man, "pick me. I need a day's work."

The Stevedore walked slowly along the bull line, his eyes stopping here and there to measure a man and appraise him. Then hitching up his trousers he roared: "Hold gang number one!"

A gang of swarthy Sicilians marched out from their place in the Shape. They were short-legged and tough, and were broad of shoulder and fist and jaw.

McGrady chewed on. "Get in," he growled, the time-keeper jotting down a mark on his pad.

"Dock gang number two!"

Irish. The scraggly group strode up to McGrady.

"Okay. Get in."

He shoved his hat over on his ear. His jaw kept working. "Hold gang number two!"

A bunch of Scandinavians.

"Get in."

Next Jan's gang was called, Jan winking a comforting eye at me, much as to say: "Don't worry. McGrady knows about you."

The Shape was thinning out. Soon the regular gangs had been called, and there remained only the scattered stragglers and the *shenangoes*, unemployed from the city, and derelicts in search of a day's work. McGrady glared at them. Still their eyes were begging him: "Pick me. Look, I'm strong." . . . "McGrady, don't you remember me?" . . . And there were

eyes which said: "For the love of God, give me a chance! Give me a day . . . an hour!"

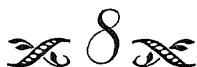
The Stevedore measured them with his cold glance. Old Humpy was rejected, and stepped aside with black despair in his face. McGrady turned to another group. "You-u!" he snapped, flinging out his stubby finger at one of the fellows who brightened with glad surprise. "You-u! An' you-u!" he picked another few extras for the forenoon. But more than one hundred men were turned back. They looked bitter and disappointed, yet none of them dared say a word.

Presently McGrady wheeled around and bored his eyes into me, the quid like a hard round ball under his jaw. "You the kid Jan spoke about," he said out of the corner of his mouth.

"Yes."

He looked me up and down. "Okay, get in," he growled, with a toss of his head. "Number five dock gang."

As I hurried toward the gates McGrady dismissed the remaining stragglers with a sweeping gesture of his hand. "That's all for today!" he cried. "Eight o'clock tomorrow morning." Then he turned and followed me through the gates, into the clang and roaring surge of the pier shed.



THE DRAUGHTY SHED SMELLED OF SPICES AND OTHER AROMATIC cargo shipped here from distant lands. The far corners of the building were nearly pitch dark, but a string of electric lamps ran aloft, all the way from the gates to the pier end out at the wash and swish of the Hudson. A large ship was just passing by out there, slowly pushing upstream with a pack of yapping tugboats at its heels.

In the center of the pier stretched a broad runway for teamsters and trucks, and on both sides was vast space for the temporary stowing of cargo. Piles of checker-marked freight were lying around, waiting to be shipped in the *Manahawskin* on her outbound passage. The air was rent with raucous shouts as longshoremen hurried in all directions—little sturdy Italians, red-faced Irish, colored fellows from Harlem, Poles and Swedes.

The foremen were striding excitedly along the runway while yelling hoarsely to their gangs. "Hey! Hey! Hurry up! Go get slings! Get a hand truck, you! Over here! Get a move on you!"

And under the glaring lights the men scurried among the aisles and around the piles of cargo, checking the freight, trucking it, tiering it.

"Slings! Slings! Hurry up!"

I looked around me in bewilderment, deafened by shrill whistles, shouts and yells. Someone shoved a hard fist between my shoulder blades, and glancing back I saw McGrady himself, quid bulging under his lip. "Hey, you!" he bawled. "Wake up! Get a hand truck! Get a move on you!"

He strode off along the driveway, between dodging hand trucks and hurrying men. From the *Manahawskin's* frosty deck issued a clank and chug-chugging of winches, accompanied by puffs of white steam. Longshoremen swarmed on deck, some unrolling big tarpaulins from the hatches, others fixing gears or busy with coils of stiff rope.

I was saved by Jan who came pulling a hand truck. "Here!" he grinned, handing me the truck. "Come along. You work in my gang."

And now, out of the *Manahawskin's* hold, at the end of a taut steel wire, rose a draft of rubber bales. At a sign from the hatchman the bales stopped in their upward motion, swung over the ship's side and dropped with a crash onto the wooden skid below, where two fellows pounced on them and jerked the sling loose. Then, with smart handling of their hooks the skidmen toppled the rubber bales onto the waiting hand trucks. A checker made his marks on the bales, and they were hauled away to be piled at various tiers in the shed.

That's how a morning started at the docks.

"How do you like it?" Jan asked me as we sat in a waterside cafeteria at lunch time.

I made a wry face.

He took a sip of the hot coffee. "It's a tough job," he said.

"How long have you worked here?" I asked.

"Oh—some twelve years."

"Twelve! Why don't you get yourself an easier job?"

He shook his head. "No, no. I like it. Always did like ships."

The cafeteria was full of dock hands who shouted and

argued. Jan relaxed and made the most of his lunch hour. He would work hard that afternoon.

He sat with an absent look in his eyes. Then he spoke to me. "Listen, I'm going to ask you a favor. I'll probably work overtime tonight, for they got to get this ship out. It's been delayed on account of the weather. Would you take Karen to a show or something? I'll give you the money."

"Well—yes," I said. "I'll do that if you want me to."

"She's got to have some fun," he said. "She gets awful blue, and it isn't good for her.—So, will you take her?"

"Yes, of course."

"That's fine. That's a load off my chest."

He fell silent again, oblivious to the noise in the cafeteria, the clatter of dishes, the loud talk. There were many things I wanted to ask him. Most of all how he came to meet my Aunt Karen? But I thought he would probably tell me in his own good time.

## 9

JAN SOON TOOK ME INTO HIS CONFIDENCE.

A bleak morning came around, with howling blizzard and snow. A crowd of longshoremen, we sought shelter under a warehouse canopy in West Street, where we stamped our feet in the cold, hoping a ship would get in from the sea. Yet the chance was slight. "What's the use hanging around?" the men growled. "Won't be no ship in this damn weather anyhow."

From off the shore rolled the plaintive calls of steamers unable to get into port. No pilot would risk his good name, trying to take a ship into the narrow Ambrose Channel in this onslaught of gray waves. Buoys and beacon lights were invisible. Driving sleet whipped across the sea. Gongs and warning bells were muffled as the blizzard roared in from the wintry Atlantic, a stinging blast with Greenland chill in the marrow, packing both bay and river with ice.

And here in West Street the storm tore around the street corners with snow clouds so dense that we could not even see the pier gates across the tracks. Traffic filled the air with a menacing thunder of trucks and drays.

"Won't be no ship," the men muttered. "Can't make it."

A couple of hunched-up Negroes came out of the snow and joined us. And I thought that here on the waterfront the American ideal of democracy was realized. Here were Irish, Italians, Negroes, Bohemians, Poles, and also a few Germans and Scandinavians. And there seemed to be no divisions of race or nationality, only men trying to find enough work to make a living. I did notice, however, that the Italians flocked together, but they did so because most of them spoke poor English and were better understood by their own.

I didn't know it then, but later I learned that there had not always been such democratic spirit among the men. It had to be achieved. In the heyday of the Irish there were no Negroes on the waterfront. Then, gradually, the shipowners began to employ colored men to break strikes. The Irish opposed them. Bloody battles were fought. But eventually the "smokes" were admitted into the unions, and became allies instead of enemies of the old longshoremen. A man was a man, as it should be.

They were standing here now, under the warehouse canopy—a crowd of Irishmen, Italians, Poles and colored fellows, shivering in the cold. From time to time one of the men would venture out across the snowy tracks to see if the "flag was up." For it is a time-honored custom that the Stevedore hoist the American flag outside the gates when expecting a ship at the pier.

But no flag was flying, and the men's hope of a day's work was dashed. The ships bellowed off the coast.

Jan shook his head. "No ship."

The mass of a towering truck drove out of the snow. When it had roared off, Jan spoke again. "Listen," he said to me. "Want to come along and warm yourself in the Sailors' Home? It's just a couple of blocks down the street."

"Let's go," I agreed. "This is a hell of a way to treat men.

Letting us stand here in this cold. Couldn't the shipowners build some kind of a shelter?"

Jan grabbed my arm. "Shut up!" he whispered, with a quick glance around.

"Why?" I protested. "This is an outrageous system."

"Keep quiet, will you!"

"But why?"

"Can't tell you now. Tonight. When we get home."

"All right, then." We started off, hunched forward to buck the wind-driven snow. A short walk took us to the old prison-like structure of the Sailors' Home. We stepped into the reading room, shook the snow off our coats and sat down at a table littered with papers and magazines.

We dozed in the warmth for a while, then from an inside pocket of his jacket Jan took a crumpled letter which he started to read. A smile crossed his face.

"Good news?" I asked.

"Well . . . it's from my mother. She wants me to come home. Writes the same thing every month, all the time."

"Don't you want to go home?"

He looked up. "Home! . . . No . . ." He shook his head as though an unsurmountable obstacle stood in his way.

A long pause followed. Jan looked down at the letter. He didn't read it this time, but merely glanced here and there to recall its message. "Sure," he said, "it's from Bohemia. My mother has got a nice big farm there."

"She has!" I exclaimed. "So, you have a farm in Bohemia!"

"My mother has. It's a nice country. There's high mountains and a river."

"The river—is that the Elbe?"

"That's right," he said eagerly. "Elbe, that's it. Lots of boats coming there."

He fell silent again, and I watched him as he sat with the letter in his hand. He could be somewhat over thirty, perhaps. Wind and weather had roughened his face.



He smiled a bit ruefully. "She's telling me about a girl," he said. "My mother is. Says she isn't married yet. Says it would be nice if I came home."

"So why don't you go?" I said.

"No, no . . . that's out." The letter sank to the table and he gazed absent-mindedly through the window. The snow whirled about. Dull growls rolled in over the waterside.

Suddenly he turned to me. "Listen," he said gravely. "I want to tell you something. It's about Karen."

"Yes. What is it?"

"Well . . . don't mind her. You know, she's a funny woman in some ways."

I thought that was putting it rather mildly, considering the scandal she had created in Norway, and how she had ruined young Bjorn.

Jan was watching me. "See what I mean?" he said. "Don't mind her. She's kind of upset. But she'll be all right. I can't tell you now, but . . . she's had a lot of bad breaks."

## ❧ 10 ❧

WE SAT IN THE READING ROOM FOR ANOTHER HALF hour, then Jan suggested we go home. So we buttoned our coats and stepped out into snowy Jane Street. Walking along we dodged in and out between trucks parked in front of transportation companies whose signs told of business done with other cities: Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore.

"This way," said Jan. And bent double against the blast we crossed windswept West Washington Market. As we neared home Jan began to look apprehensive, and hurried his gait. But when we stepped through the door and he found that everything was well with Karen, he beamed and rubbed his hands. "Won't be no ship," he explained to her. "Can't get in. The river full of ice."

"Well, you need a rest," she said. She had put on a fresh house dress, and I thought her very beautiful tonight in this calm frame of mind.

Jan reflected her mood. He was full of good cheer. While Karen busied herself in the kitchen we sat in the inner room, listening to the storm outside and the sounds from river and sea. Soon I led him to speak about Bohemia, and he told of the wide fields and the forests, and the river Elbe which flows through the countryside. And he described the Bohemian springtime when thousands of fruit trees are in bloom, and

cherry blossoms and pink and white flowers are like a haze in the air.

Once having started to tell me about his native land Jan talked on eagerly, as though it were a long time since he had a listener. He spoke about old Bohemian customs and how the peasants used to help each other get the work done. They formed little clans or groups of friends, he said, and when Farmer Novak planted potatoes his neighbors lent him a hand. The work was done in no time, and with great fun in the bargain. The same with the harvest. Don't think that Honza Malik and his daughter and two sons were left to struggle along alone with their poor hand-scythe. For that's where Novak's American harvesting machine came in, the pride of the village. Jenda Novak rode in triumph on his beautiful machine to the field of every friend of his who had a crop to be harvested.

There came a lull in the talk. A tugboat shrieked in the river. "Jan," I reminded him, "you said you would tell me why you don't have any shelters down at the docks. Why did you get so upset when I mentioned it today?"

"It's dangerous talk," he said. "Someone might hear you. I wouldn't want you pushed into the river on a dark night."

"What do you mean?—Pushed into the river? . . ."

"You don't believe me. Well, I tell you, be careful! You don't know what's going on down at the docks. A fellow I knew was killed last fall. Freddie Reed. They beat him with a blackjack. You better not get mixed up in all that."

He turned around as Karen came to the door and said she was going to bed. He nodded to her, and smiled. "Okay," he said. "Sleep well. Arne and I will be sitting here for a while."

She gave me a quick glance, then retired to her room. Jan put more coal into the oven. That done, he went back to his chair again, and we sat talking about Bohemia, and listening to the wind moaning outside, and the snow pelting the windowpanes.

## ❧ 11 ❧

THE NEXT MORNING WE WENT DOWN TO THE DOCKS EARLY to see if by chance a ship had been able to make its way up the river. Other longshoremen came out of the winter morning's gloom, bundled up in old clothes, and collars turned above their ears. "Hello, Tony," Jan greeted them. "Hello, Pat. No ship, I guess."

"Out o' luck," the burly old Irishman growled, his face frozen stiff, gray tufts of hair shooting forth from under his cap. He spat at the snow with disgust. "Blizzard be damned," he muttered. "If it keeps up like this, an' no wor-rk, what will a body eat, I ask ye, and what will he dr-rink, with even the water turned to ice in the tap?"

"It's tough," said Jan. "But it can't keep up forever."

"Forever!" Pat echoed him bitterly. "I tell ye, me lad, a body can do a lot of star-rvin' in less time than that."

More men arrived. They stood around in groups, hunched up for warmth while they talked about the weather and cursed it. Then one by one they drifted off.

Jan did not want to return home directly and be in Karen's way, so we walked down behind a pier shed and stood watching the Hudson. In this sub-zero cold the river gave off great clouds of steam that the wind drove across the surface like

smoke from a conflagration. Vapors eddied about the piers, rose on a blast of wind and engulfed the corrugated pier sheds. And across the river in the gray dawn the Jersey shore was a long black smudge, with cranes and loading booms like groping arms in the fog.

Presently a bark was heard from over on a river barge alongside the pier, and I saw a little dog who seemed full of protest against Jan and myself. Now the shadowy form of a man emerged from out of the barge's cabin. "Tyra, be quiet," he said gently, speaking with a pronounced Swedish accent.

"That's Nils," said Jan. "A friend o' mine. Let's go in and warm up a bit."

Tyra barked fiercely as we approached. The barge was covered with snow. A lifebuoy hung on the cabin wall. The window was lit by a warm glow from within.

"Hello there," Nils greeted us. He was of Jan's age, a lean tow-headed chap.

Now Tyra realized whom she had abused, and she leaped ashore and danced around Jan with joy, turning from him only long enough to throw a bark at me, which said plainly: "Look out. I don't know you."

"Come in and get warm," said Nils. As we entered the cabin Tyra jumped up on the bunk cover beside her master. Nils pulled the dog's ears affectionately as he turned to Jan and talked about the weather and the ships. He was a soft-spoken man and had a seaman's sincere blue eyes, but there was a hurt in them. Looking around in the cabin I realized that here was no ordinary bargeman. A row of books was stacked against the wall; on the desk lay a pile of nautical charts.

Nils glanced at the window as a ship's foghorn sounded out at sea. "They are having a hard time out there," he said.

Jan nodded. "For two days now."

Again the call came, a vibrating blast that rolled through the fog and was heard above the roaring of the wind.

"Must be half a dozen of them caught off the shore," Nils said, stroking the sleek head of his little dog. And as he continued talking it was of the river and the tides and his work. The Coast Guard was mentioned, and the International Ice Patrol. I gathered that each spring two Coast Guard cutters are sent out to patrol the fog-shrouded area of the Grand Banks off Newfoundland, where the cold Labrador Current meets the Gulf Stream, and drifting icebergs are a great menace to the transatlantic ships.

Silence fell. The wind whistled around the cabin corners outside. "Well, I guess Arne and I will get going," said Jan after a while, buttoning his coat.

"Come again," said Nils. "I am here most of the time, you know."

"We'll be seeing you," said Jan. "Take care of yourself. So long, Tyral!"

The cold blast struck us in the face as we stepped outside. "Does he live alone there?" I asked Jan. "Is he married?"

"No, but there's a woman mixed up in it."

We went back home. "Still no ship," Jan said to Karen. "Tomorrow maybe."

Karen was on edge again. Several times I caught her looking at me in cold hostility.

But why, then, had she written me so warmly and asked me to come?

## ❧ 12 ❧

**I**N THE EVENING WE SAT IN THE INNER ROOM AGAIN. I HOPED Jan would tell me about Karen and why she acted so strangely, but he remained silent on that point. Instead he talked of his Bohemia, with now and then a pause when a train sped by the windows.

After one such interlude he rose and brought me a photograph from among his yellowing passports. "This is the girl," he said. "Eliska . . ." Sitting on a white horse was a bare-legged young girl, squinting her eyes at the sun. Round about her in the farmyard chickens and geese were picking at the ground.

"Pretty," I said.

He nodded and put the picture back among his papers. Returning to his chair he sat lost in thought, then continued to talk about his homeland. The passage of time had cast a soft glow over his memories. Forgotten were poverty and toil, forgotten the German landlord and his overbearing ways. Instead there were many bright moments to recollect! Now and then the young folk used to have a dance in the village hall. On those occasions Jan always took Eliska—accompanied by her mother Cerna, of course—and she whirled proudly with him across the floor, while the girls without beaux stood out-

side the hall, looking in through the open windows and venting their disappointment by shouting nicknames at the dancers.

But Jan had to guard each word he spoke, for mother Cerna sat with other stiff-backed matrons on the wooden benches along the wall, watching every move of her pretty daughter with an eagle eye. Mother Cerna was determined that her daughter should be married properly and in due time.

But better than the occasional festivity in the hall did the young people like to dance in the woods, as was the custom at seasonal celebrations. The young men would gather wheelbarrow loads of fir needles which they spread in a suitable clearing among the trees. And no dancing on a waxed ballroom floor could be half as much fun as gliding over this smooth carpet, the air scented with fir, paper lanterns among the branches, and music from violin and harmonica filling the night.

There came one evening in the spring when the birch leaves hung like green veils about the slender tree trunks. "Eliska," Jan said, "I have something to tell you. I'm going away."

"Away?"

"Yes. To America."

"America! . . ." She grew pale. "You . . . don't care for me then?"

"I do," he protested. "That is why I go."

"I don't understand you."

"You know that I am poor," he said. "Our farm is small. So I've been thinking. Suppose I go to America and work hard for two years. I'll save all I earn, then I'll come back."

"I will wait for you," she said. "I'll not even dance while you are away." Then new anxiety pounced on her. "Perhaps you'll meet an American girl and marry her instead."

"Hol!" he said. "There's no one like you."

But she was full of anxiety, and looked into the night with brooding eyes.



“Did you ever go back?” I asked Jan after he had finished his story.

He shook his head. “Never. . . . It didn’t turn out that way.”

I was about to ask him more questions, but after a glance at his somber face I decided I had better keep quiet.

## ❧ 13 ❧

FOR THREE DAYS THE BLIZZARD KEPT THE SHIPS BATTLING the hard seas off shore beyond Sandy Hook and Rockaway, belching clouds of smoke, engines pounding, propellers churning—only to get nowhere, not daring to hazard the Narrows. Driving sleet before it the blast hurtled past Sea Gate and across Upper Bay, then struck the Hudson and the docks.

The blizzard paralyzed all the east coast. Yet on the fourth day a black hulk loomed large out in the harbor snow, as one steamer defied the tempest and none less than *Manahawskin's* sister ship, the *Manasquan*, stamped into the bay with iced rigging and decks, and was escorted up the river by shrieking tugboats.

Again grizzled longshoremen gathered at the pier in the hope of being picked for a few days of badly needed work. The Shape stood out black against the white snow. Eyes watering, the men breathed on their numb fingers while waiting patiently for the boss Stevedore. And at last McGrady emerged from the gates, bundled up in an old leather coat and with the sheepskin collar high above his ears. He knocked his battered felt hat over one eye, straddled his legs and chewed his quid as he called in the men. He hired many hands

today, yet many others were not called. Morose and disappointed, but wisely uncomplaining, the luckless dock hands straggled off in the bleak morning hour.

And now I got a taste of work I was never to forget, as I helped to drag the *Manasquan's* cables from the icy Hudson, the blizzard whistling about my ears and my hands frozen numb by sub-zero cold.

Soon the great ship was moored. Huge nets were spread from ship's side to dock to prevent any cargo from dropping into the sea. Winches chugged up on deck. Incredible amounts of freight were hoisted out of the spacious holds—but first and last rubber for rubber-hungry America, rubber from the Sunda Islands, rubber from the shores of the Java Sea. The loads dropped onto the pier with a crash.

And high above the *Manasquan's* deck cargo booms swung lustily, winches hummed, and taut steel wires ran up and down through hatchways. Rubber bales, tea bales. Tea from Japanese plantations, from Java, Bengal, Darjeeling, Travancore. Rice from Burma. Pepper from the Malabar Coast. The shed was soon choked with freight from all parts of the world which had been gathered by British Empire ships and brought to London or Bristol and then reloaded and shipped to America.

Stout hatchman Pacciale watched every draft that rose swiftly out of the hold, and with many gestures and subtle movements of his hands he directed the fellow at the winch.—Up . . . up . . . Stop! . . . Okay. Lower away!

And the rascal also kept an alert eye for the boss Stevedore. When he spied him down on the bustling pier he at once displayed an extra amount of exuberant energy and became very busy and officious. "Hook ona da sling! Hook ona da sling!" he yelled.

A cloud of snow swept across the deck. It was a cold, cold day, but no one had much time to think of it, for the *Man-*

*squan* had been delayed by rough weather, and the unloading must be done in a hurry to make up for lost time. Coffee sacks from Santos were hoisted out of number three hold, and out of another hold came a general cargo in boxes, cases and crates. It all must be trucked off at once for sorting and temporary storing in the pier shed.

More men were picked from the Shape the next day. We worked very hard that week. The loading of the ship was forced, with all hands busy, day and night shifts, and we had the *Manasquan* trimmed for her outbound passage about two o'clock on Saturday morning.

We shoved our longshoremen's hooks in place below our belts, and after we had checked out at the gates Jan and I went straight home through the windy night, longing for sleep above everything else in the world.

We slept late the next morning, then went down to the docks to get our pay envelopes.

"Look!" I said when we were back home again and I had counted my money. "I'm three dollars short."

"You've got to expect that," said Jan.

As my face looked a blank, he added: "The kickback, you know."

"What do you mean?"

"The boss. He picks you every morning. So he gets a cut."

"Oh! . . . Graft!"

"Come on. It doesn't pay to squawk."

But I was smoldering. "First they make us stand in that Shape and half freeze to death. Then they make us pay for it too."

"Well, what can we do?" Jan said. "Freddie Reed made a row about it. And they killed him."

ONE DAY THE FOLLOWING WEEK I STAYED HOME, AS ONLY regular gangs had been picked from the Shape. Jan was at work. In the afternoon Karen came into my room. She looked very beautiful that day, although pale. She was quiet and subdued and seemed to be making an effort to come on better terms with me. "Arne," she said, hesitating, "will you do me a favor?"

"What is it?"

"I want you to come with me and visit a friend of mine. It's a girl I know. We used to have lots of fun in the old days. Would you mind?"

"No. I'll come if you want me to."

Her face lighted up. "You will! That's good. It won't take us long. She lives only a few blocks off.—But listen, you won't tell Jan?"

"Well . . . if you don't want him to know."

"I don't. He might get worried. You promise?"

"All right then."

"What is your friend's name?" I asked Karen after we left the house and walked up the street.

"Lizzie. She used to be a great girl."

Today something about my aunt reminded me strongly of the young Karen who came to visit us in Norway. Perhaps it was her smart clothes, or that she was still girlish and slim. She might have been an actress who had made her face look ten years older for another scene in a play.

We walked in silence. Lizzie! I thought. What a ridiculous name. Just like a character in a melodrama. What would she be like?

Karen halted before a rickety house in one of the waterfront side streets. From the nearby river came the hoarse call of a ship. Karen waited until the sound had died down. Then she said: "Here is where she lives."

I followed her as she climbed a flight of stairs and rang the bell to one of the flats. Voices reached us from within. A man was speaking in threatening tones. We heard a woman's muffled sob.

Karen rang the bell once more. She shook the knob, found the door unlocked and stepped across the threshold with me behind her.

We saw a murky flat scantily furnished with a bed, a few chairs, a victrola and a littered table. In the center of the room two people stood facing each other, a small woman and a big bulky man. Upon our entrance they turned to us as though interrupted in a heated argument. The man was a beefy-cheeked and broad-shouldered brute, but he was dressed in good clothes and wore a black felt hat. The woman was a little frowsy blonde on wobbly heels. She had wrapped an old sweater around her shoulders for warmth. This is Lizzie, I thought. Her name fits her well.

Lizzie and the huge man were still looking at us. Karen took the lead.

"Kelly!" she cried. "You here!"

I pricked up my ears, for Kelly was the name Karen spoke that morning when someone with a rumbling voice brought the whisky that Jan later poured into the sink.

Karen threw back her head. "You here!" she said again to the uneasy Kelly. "I thought you had gone up the river?"

I didn't understand what she referred to. Kelly was probably supposed to have gone by boat somewhere. It maddened me to miss out on so much, because by their expressions I knew that Karen's reference to the river journey upset them both. Kelly sweated blood now.

He threw a nervous glance at me, then tried to reach Karen with his eyes, begging her to be quiet. He said something in a strained voice. Just one word. It sounded like: "Sail." Sailboat, maybe.

I was wrong, for Karen repeated the word contemptuously. "Bail!" she said with a snort.

I didn't know what bail meant. Kelly clenched his fists. But he had remarkable self-control. Turning to Lizzie he said in an even voice: "I will go and buy what we said then."

I was not deceived, however. This was an excuse for him to get away from us.

Then he added, with a threatening undertone: "I—will—be—back."

Lizzie lowered her eyes to the floor.

"So long," Kelly said, stalked across the floor, jerked the door open and banged it shut behind him.

A long pause followed. With perfect timing came the ominous call from a ship, rolling slowly over the waterside, flowing through the streets, and filling this gray room with its ghostly vibrations.

Lizzie raised her head, and turning to Karen she laughed bitterly. But her laugh was also meant to be disarming. She didn't want Karen to be angry with her.

Yet Karen was furious. "Is he staying with you for good now?" she asked, smoldering.

"Just for the time being, dearie."

"Why doesn't he go back where he belongs?"

Lizzie eyed me cautiously. "Too close to the police station," she whispered. ". . . *You know.*"

Having pondered the answer Karen appeared to feel better about it all. She now came around to introducing me. "My nephew," she said, archly. "Visiting me from Norway. His father is a professor. And what a house they live in!"

"Now ain't that wonderful!" said Lizzie, beaming generously on me. "I'm sure glad to meet you. But you'll excuse me. Lordy me, I must look a sight. Have had a cold, you know. Haven't been feelin' so well."

She simpered and cooed and was all ingratiating smiles. At last Karen seemed to think she was going too far. "Cut it out," she snapped. "Lizzie, you fool."

Lizzie playfully slapped Karen's hand. "Lemme be, you," she giggled. "Karen, darlin', you've always been like that. Men leave you cold. I mean, you was never like Lizzie. You always pretendin'. But Lizzie got the real stuff in her."

"Shut up!" Karen warned her and winked a meaningful eye in my direction. "What's new?" she added, switching the conversation to another track.

"New? Nothing new," said Lizzie, with a shrug of her narrow shoulders. Then she started to cough. When the attack was over she stepped to a closet and brought out a whisky bottle and three glasses. She poured with an unsteady hand. "Here's for good luck," she said, her eyes shining as she offered me a glass.

The liquor looked raw, and I hesitated.

"Take it," said Karen. "Won't kill you."

But Lizzie tripped back to the closet and fetched a bottle of wine. "Here's for the gentleman," she nudged me. "Lizzie always understands a gentleman, now ain't that the truth, say?"

Karen said nothing, as she was busy helping herself to another drink. It worried me, for the effect of the first drink already showed. And now I thought I knew the reason why



Jan insisted she leave liquor alone. She had taken only one drink, but that little already unsettled her. She had looked so fine on our way over here, and been so grave and dignified. Now her cheeks burned, and she was growing sluttish and trivial.

Lizzie was still offering me the wine. Fearing she would be hurt if I refused it, I took the glass and saluted her. "Skoal!" I said.

Her fire flickered. "Skoal!"

While I drank I remembered that there was prohibition in America, yet Lizzie's closet seemed well stocked with both liquor and wine. My unspoken question was answered in the next moment, however. Karen put down her glass. "Good stuff," she said, with a knowing smack of her lips.

"Kelly handles nothin' but good stuff," said Lizzie gallantly. "Now, ain't that the truth, Karen, darlin'? He hit me today, an' he hit me yesterday, but I won't say nothin' against him. A man's got to have his faults. But he handles good stuff, Kelly does, you got to admit."

Karen winked a warning eye, and Lizzie fell silent as though someone had struck her. She stared, frightened, at the door.

She was soon back in her own, however. The whisky had gone to her head, and now she started the victrola which filled the gray room with a shrill dance tune. She grabbed hold of Karen, put her arm around her waist, and they were off across the floor, reviewing all the steps they knew in the old days.

In the good old days. ". . . Remember that time in Cleveland?" Lizzie giggled. "At Hotel Royal. Lordy me, didn't those guys throw a party! And you pretendin' you was a real lady from Europe."

"I'm a lady at that," Karen said testily.

"Sure, sure. I meant no offense. Sure, you are, and didn't I always say you could pass for a duchess any day. I only

meant the story you was tellin' those rich goofs from the coast. Gee, you was swell."

Karen's twisted smile suggested her to be torn between two emotions: pride in her successful act, and resentment at Lizzie's plain recognition of her being less than she had pretended. She pouted for a minute, then forgot about it. Whirling with Lizzie she recalled the good old days.

"Karen, darlin'," Lizzie babbled on, "you've always been a great gal. But you never heard from that fellow, Dick, now did you?"

Karen pushed Lizzie away from her with sudden fury. "I've told you," she cried, "never to bring that up again! The bastard! I hope he's rotting in hell!"

"Come on now," Lizzie once more tried to mollify her excitable friend. "I don't mean no harm. He treated you bad. Sure he did. He'd no right to beat you up. An' then kickin' you out of the house like he did."

"Shut up!" Karen scowled. "I don't want to hear."

"All right, all right. I'll say no more. I got my own troubles. Now, here's Kelly. Sure, he beats me. But he's got his worries too, believe me. Plenty I tell you. There's that Donzietti gang musclin' in on his business. And they ain't handling no good stuff either, leastways not like Kelly is. Things been goin' bad for him. Somethin's going to happen. I feel it in my bones."

"Something—what?"

"Oh . . ." Lizzie wasn't so drunk that she had lost all her wits. "Somethin', I don't know what. But what's the use worryin'? Let's have another drink. You only live once."

I stood helpless in a corner. Karen could not be spoken to, could not be reasoned with. Her face was flushed. She was trivial and mean. And all that because of a drink or two!

They danced, and the victrola ground on. From time to time the sorrowful call of a ship's siren rolled in from the sea.

## ✎ 15 ✎

KAREN WAS TRUCULENT AND NOISY ON OUR WAY BACK through the streets. I walked beside her, humiliated. She locked herself into her room as soon as we came home, and was evidently asleep when Jan returned from work that night. He understood what had happened, and stared moodily at the closed door.

I was still glowing with resentment against Karen. "Why do you put up with her?" I asked later on, when we were sitting in the inner room. "She isn't any good."

Jan looked at me disapprovingly. "You're wrong," he said. "And I don't want you to talk that way. Sure she has her faults, but so have we all. Still she's a wonderful woman in many ways."

Aware of my confusion, he added in a friendlier tone: "Perhaps you can't see what I mean. But you're young yet. Some day you'll understand and you'll be more tolerant. A person isn't something to throw aside just because she isn't perfect. One's got to have a little patience."

There was a long silence after that.

"How did you come to meet her?" I finally said, asking the question that had occupied my mind since the day I arrived here.

"Well, that's a long story."

"Don't tell me if you don't want to."

"It's okay. I've been thinking myself that I ought to tell you. After all, she's your aunt. She has nobody but us two here, and . . . if something should happen to me—God forbid—it would be well if you had an idea."

An El-train roared by out on the tracks. After the noise had quieted down he glanced at the door to make certain Karen did not overhear us. Well, it happened a year or so ago," he said slowly. "I wasn't living here then. Had a room down on West Street."

He shifted position on the chair before he continued: "I was on my way home from the pier one morning. About three o'clock. Saturday, you know. We had been working all night to clear the ship out. It was in April. A foggy morning. I was walking along with a friend of mine—Tony. Then he grabbed my arm, and he says to me: Look. It's a dame standing there.

"So I looked up, and there was a woman leaning against an old barge. I couldn't see her so well because of the fog, but she was—you know . . ." He made a gesture suggesting smartness and elegance. "She had on a black dress. But no coat."

I nodded. "Then what happened?"

"Well . . . seeing her there I figured something was wrong, so I said to Tony: We better find out. Maybe she's sick. But Tony said for me to come along. Sick? he says. Don't be a damn fool and get yourself in trouble. She ain't sick. She's just plain drunk, that's what's the matter with her. She's walked out of one of them hot joints.

"So I went along with Tony. But then I stopped, and I said to him: Listen, Tony. You go on home. I'm going back to that dame. Can't leave her like that. Maybe she's drunk, maybe not. Can't tell. She might be sick at that.

"You're a fool, Tony said to me. You'll get yourself in trouble. But I thought I'd been in plenty trouble before. So I went over to that dame by the barge. Her eyes were closed. She looked kind of worn out, but she was pretty." His hands described a high bosom and a slender waist. "And she had some of those—what you call 'em?—around her wrist . . ."

"Bracelets?"

"Yes. And gold too. Now I don't know if she was drunk. She had been drinking some, I could tell that. But there was something else wrong. I thought maybe she better go to a hospital. So I tried to find a cop. But nobody was around."

While Jan was talking I recalled a snatch of conversation I once overheard between my parents in Norway. My mother had said that Karen used to get fits when she couldn't have her own way.

"You say she looked dazed," I prodded him. "You have no idea what was the matter with her?"

He shook his head. "Not then, I didn't."

"When you spoke to her, did she answer you?"

"Sure. But she talked queer, whispering like. Don't do it, she said. Dick, don't do it."

"Dick? . . . You are sure it wasn't another name?"

"No, it was Dick. I heard that plain."

He paused to collect his thoughts before he continued. At first his story came in a fluent stream, then he began to stumble and hesitate. It was easy enough for him to describe how he found Karen, but the following developments were not so easy to frame into words.

My story would therefore be both disjointed and obscure if I should attempt to report it in Jan's own words, with all his digressions. We talked night after night, and sometimes I would hear an interesting detail while we hung about the pier, waiting for a ship. Other things I did not learn until several years later. And for these reasons I think it best if I

tell this story in its continuity, such as I finally came to know it.

Spring morning on the waterfront. In another hour West Street would suddenly awake with a thunder of trucks and wagons, and ships' whistles rending the air. But this was the still hour before dawn. The silent mist surged about the barge. Silent too flowed the Hudson as the morning tide drew in from the sea. Only at infrequent intervals did a ripple splash against the barnacled piles of the dock.

Jan touched the girl's arm. "Lady," he said, "you need someone to help you?"

She quivered. Her eyes had been closed, but now she opened them and their color was the color of the mist, blurred, hazy and gray. She looked at Jan, yet did not see him, and she mumbled something in a toneless voice as if she were afraid. "Don't . . . do it," she said. "Dick, don't do it . . ."

Jan drew back a step, awed by the mystery of this girl who stood there like a dream figure in the fog—slender and golden-haired, her toneless voice like nothing he had ever listened to before, her gray eyes gazing at something she alone could see.

Jan's customary jauntiness left him, and he desperately looked about for a policeman. But he was alone with the strange girl.

A seagull's disconsolate shriek broke the silence as the white bird winged slowly out of the fog. The girl trembled in the morning chill. Jan decided he must take her away, or she would fall dangerously ill. His own place was only a short way off. He would take the girl home with him and have her lie down on his bed. Then he would call the police, or an ambulance.

The young woman tottered as if she were about to fall. He put out his hand to steady her. "Lady," he said, "it's a raw

morning. You'll catch cold."

He was not certain she heard him. Following the direction of her gaze he saw nothing but fog on the river, and beyond that the shadowy Hoboken piers and vague bulks of ships.

"Lady," he repeated, "it's bad for you to stay here. I think you'd better come with me."

She answered in a small voice, the voice in which a stunned child might speak. "Yes . . . but . . . you won't hit me . . . will you?"

He stared at her. "And why would I hit you?" he cried. "Lady, please!"

"Don't . . . hit me," she repeated, yet with no change of expression in her eyes.

"Jesus Christ, the way you talk!" he groaned, starting to walk with her across the lot. "Somebody been hitting you, lady? Tell me who he is, and I'll beat the yellow guts out of the bastard."

She trembled at the angry sound of his voice, and drew back as if afraid of him.

He controlled his indignation. "I'm not going to hurt you," he said. "Of course not. You're safe with me, that I can tell you."

She followed him, walking beside him like a sleep-walker, white-faced, her dazed eyes staring into space.

"My house is right over there," Jan said as they crossed the empty street. "I'll see you're taken care of. What's happened to you anyway? Good thing you didn't fall into the river."

THEY SOON REACHED THE OLD BRICK HOUSE WHERE JAN rented a room from Mrs. Blom, the widow of a sea captain. The house was one of a few similar dwellings left in that locality, which saw their glory in the days of hoop-skirts, bonnets, and beaver hats. The other houses were sadly dilapidated, but Mrs. Blom managed to keep hers in repair. The door was flanked by two white wooden pillars, and the knob was of well polished brass.

Jan knew that five-thirty was Mrs. Blom's time of rising. She disliked being disturbed earlier, so he opened the door quietly. Leading the girl by the arm, he crossed the hall and stepped into his room.

The girl followed him willingly, still with that faraway expression in her eyes. He helped her to the bed. "You lie down here," he said gently. "You'll soon be all right."

She did not seem to hear him. He spread a blanket over her, then went to pull down the window shade. The mist came rolling in above the high concrete wall which shut the river from view.

The girl wailed softly, and Jan's first thought was to call the police. But he stopped at the door, his hand on the knob. He hated the cops. They were never on the side of people like



him anyway. They would help you if you slipped them some cash, or if you knew any big shots. He hated to think of those bullies bustling in here and starting to question the girl. He might only get her into a worse fix.

Returning to the bed he watched the girl's white little hand on top of the blanket—like the hand of a child. She turned her head and said something in her toneless voice, with a pause between each word.

"I can't hear you," he said, bending down.

"I . . . don't . . . want to go."

He watched her in surprise. "You—want to stay?"

"I want . . . to . . . be with you," she sobbed.

He looked puzzled and confused. The room being chilly he covered the girl's bare arm with the blanket. But as he touched her she gave an anguished cry: "Don't . . . beat me. Please!"

"I'm just trying to help you," he said, exasperated.

She was speaking again, dazedly, but with entreating earnestness. "Dick . . . please, let me . . . stay."

"Oh! . . ." He understood. And now she began to weep. Above her sobbing broke the rumble of an early truck out in the street. Jan glanced at the clock. Still another hour before Mrs. Blom would get up. He needed her help. He did not want to call the cops, but instead another plan had formed in his mind, and he thought of Dr. Thomas who lived over on Waverly Place. He had great confidence in him.

The girl had fallen asleep. He decided to wait until Mrs. Blom rose. He would tell her what had happened and have her watch over the girl while he went for the doctor.

Having pulled a chair over to the bed he sat down. Dawn was breaking. The curtain cracks glimmered with light. More and more trucks thundered by out there—some of them on their way to West Washington Market. But they failed to waken the sleeper. Her bosom rose and fell under the blanket. Her beautiful face was drawn.

At last from the room above came the loud signal of an alarm clock, promptly followed by the sounds of creaking floor planks as Mrs. Blom left her bed. Jan gave her ten minutes in which to get dressed before he went upstairs and knocked.

"Come in," she called, her voice remarkably firm for so early a riser.

The shades were up when Jan entered, and through the windows one had a view of the waterside, with docks and piers wrapped in a translucent morning mist. Mrs. Blom turned to him, a matronly woman near sixty, with a gruff exterior which belied her warm heart. Her roomers were mostly shipping clerks and the like, with now and then a transitory seaman. She was a friend to them all.

"Jan, what's the matter?" she said. "You look worried."

He cleared his throat, and found it somewhat difficult to explain why a girl should be sleeping in his bed. While he searched for words Mrs. Blom stepped into her kitchen and put the coffee pot on the stove. "Sit down," she called to him. "I'll be with you in a minute."

He seated himself on the edge of a chair. The room in which he sat bore the emphatic stamp of the late Captain Blom whose forthright Swedish countenance was immortalized in the tinted photograph framed above the mantelpiece, a serene face with dark handlebar mustache and pointed side whiskers falling over his chest.

With Mrs. Blom as guide one might walk around in this little room and evoke the memories of Captain Blom's travels over the entire face of this planet—at least every nook accessible by water route. Those carved ivory elephants on the mantelpiece were a memento from a stop in Calcutta; that brass gong he had bought in Cairo. And the delicate workmanship of those silken fans beside the window testified to the culture of the ancient Koreans.

A smell of coffee filled the room, and soon Mrs. Blom came

in with a tray. "Here's a cup of coffee for you," she said. "I suppose you've been working all night."

Jan said he had.

"Now, what's on your mind?" she asked, and took a sip of the steaming coffee.

"Well, it happened this morning," he began, telling briefly how he had come across the girl, and how he had brought her home with him.

Mrs. Blom abruptly put down her cup. "Why didn't you tell me at once?" she said, alarmed. "I'll have to take a look at her."

She rose. Jan followed her. When they came downstairs, the girl still slept.

"She looks ill," Mrs. Blom murmured. "Poor thing . . ."

## ❧ 17 ❧

JAN CAUGHT DR. THOMAS JUST AS HE WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE the house for a sick call. "Sounds like she is suffering from a spell of amnesia," he said, after listening to Jan. "She's had a shock, perhaps. Call me when she wakes, and I'll try to come right over."

Back at the house again, Jan told Mrs. Blom what the doctor had said. The girl lay as before with an expression of pain and weariness on her white face.

He sat down to wait. Soon, from the floor above, came the sounds of Mrs. Blom cleaning house. There was a hush over the waterfront. The ships had cleared out.

The hours wore on toward noon, then into the early afternoon. The girl still slept. Now even Jan felt tired, and his head dropped on his breast. But he jerked himself awake again. He wondered if Dr. Thomas would send the girl to a hospital. Or perhaps her people would come and take her home.

He was again nodding when he heard her give a soft cry. Her eyes were open; their dazed expression had gone. They seemed gray in the mist by the barge; now they were blue. She no longer looked *past* him. She looked *at* him. But she

did not appear to recognize him. She glanced around her in bewilderment.

He was afraid to speak to her, for turmoil followed her awakening. She rose on her elbow and stroked her forehead to bring order among her thoughts. "Where am I?" she asked with a puzzled gaze on Jan. "Who are you?"

"I brought you here."

"Brought me?"

"Yes. From that barge."

She kept staring at him.

"It was raw down there," he said, "so I took you home with me."

She glanced around the room, and grew more and more confused. She held her head. "A barge?" she repeated. "A barge? . . ."

Then memory flashed into her mind. "Yes! Yes! . . . Oh, God! . . ." She rocked from side to side, sobbed and buried her face in her hands.

Jan looked on helpless for a moment, then hurried out in the hall and called Mrs. Blom.

"There's something wrong," he said, anxious. "You go in to her. I'll run and get the doctor."

Dr. Thomas came right over, and Jan went up and sat with Mrs. Blom while the doctor talked to the girl. "Wonder what's wrong with her?" Jan said gravely. "She was crying like anything."

"We'll soon find out," Mrs. Blom replied. "I don't know what to make of her. Looks kind of frillery, but she's got some real troubles, I think."

"What did she tell you?"

"Nothing. Wouldn't speak. She was just holding her head. Just sat there an' rocked her body. I feel sorry for her, but I suppose there are many like her here in New York."

While waiting, Mrs. Blom picked up a dust rag which she

moved over the late captain's photograph.

"He got around a lot, didn't he?" said Jan, with a glance at the many odd objects in the room.

"Every place in the world. He brought these silk fans from Japan. I was just a girl then. Brought me some kimonos too. I still have 'em packed away. Oh, he was a grand man, and we had lots of fun. But it all came to an end. I don't complain though. I've had my share of good times. It's more'n most people can say for themselves."

Soon the doctor entered the room and put his bag on a chair. "Well," he said, "I've had a talk with her."

"And what's ailing her?" said Mrs. Blom.

"A great deal, I'm afraid. Still she's not a case for the hospital. As a matter of fact, I don't think any hospital would take her."

"No? . . ."

"There's nothing a hospital can do for her. But she needs care."

"Her folks will come for her, I suppose?"

"She claims she's no people here, and no friends. She says she has no place to go."

Jan and Mrs. Blom exchanged a glance. "How's that?" Mrs. Blom said, again turning to the doctor.

"She says her people live in Norway. That's where she was born."

"Hm, I thought so."

"She didn't want to tell me much about herself," the doctor continued. "But I gathered that she had been treated roughly by someone—a man. She has black and blue marks on her."

Silence. Mrs. Blom was thinking the matter over. Jan too looked quite concerned.

"We are in a fix," the doctor said. "If she had still been in the coma I could have her taken to a hospital. But not now. She's not sick enough for that."

Mrs. Blom cleared her throat. "Well," she said, "far be it from me to drive a sick girl into the street—if she's no place to go. After all, I'm Swedish-born myself and I suppose we've got to take care of our own. I think I can put her up until she gets on her feet again. I've a couple of empty rooms down there anyway."

"That's very nice of you," Dr. Thomas said. "That solves the problem."

"She'll be taken care of."

The doctor was turning something over in his mind. "There's one thing I must tell you," he said. "You should know."

"What is that?"

"The girl has . . . some sort of trouble. I won't go into detail. But . . . she suffers from spells. I don't think they come very often, and they're not dangerous. Still, unless you know beforehand you might get frightened."

"Takes a lot to frighten an old trouper like me," said Mrs. Blom grimly. "Is there anything I can do if it should happen?"

"Nothing. There's nothing anyone can do. Just see that she gets a good rest. But humor her a little. Try not to cross her. That's important just now. I'll drop in in a day or two and see how she's getting along."

AFTER THE DOCTOR LEFT, MRS. BLOM SAID SHE WOULD GO down to put a room in order for the girl, and also see about something to eat for her.

"I'll go out and grab a bite myself," said Jan.

"Should think you need to catch up on your sleep too."

"I'll take a nap when I get back. Tony'll be here around eight."

"Tony!" said Mrs. Blom with distaste. "So you still hang around with that foul-mouthed wop."

Jan laughed. "Tony is okay. They don't hire Sunday school teachers at the dock."

He went to the cafeteria for his supper. On coming back to the house he found his room cleared and the girl moved next door. He had gone without sleep for thirty-six hours now, and that was too much even for him. With a groan he threw himself on top of the bed, his eyes closing at once. He took a deep breath and became aware of a scent of face powder on the pillow, where the girl had rested her head. Like an intoxicating perfume. Then he dropped into sleep as one drops into an abyss of oblivion.

Deep in that darkness he heard someone calling him with a loud rough voice, and as he opened his leaden eyes—there



stood Tony in his flashy clothes, shaking him by the arm. "Hey, you, hinky dinky!" he shouted. "Get up! Crap's sake! Here it's half-past eight and you not shaved or nothin'."

Jan blinked his eyes to get his bearings, swung his legs over the edge of the bed and rumbled his hair.

"Hurry up and get shaved," said the impatient Tony. He was a plump fellow with curly hair, full lips and large Italian eyes. "Let's go over to that speakeasy on MacDougal Street. They got swell stuff. Muscatel."

"Beer for me," said Jan. "I'm thirsty as hell."

"Beer, wine—anything. But step on the gas." During weekdays Tony was a hard-working longshoreman, but in his Saturday night get-up, he was on the florid side, with a purple tie shooting out below his chin, socks to match, and an amazing silk handkerchief sprouting from the breast pocket.

"How did you make out with that dame?" he asked as Jan changed clothes.

"Dame? . . . Oh, she's all right."

"Yeah, I got her number. A fast one, I says to myself. Lucky thing you didn't get yourself in dutch."

Jan was fixing his tie before the mirror. He narrowed his eyes, but made no reply. He pressed the tie knot firmly under the collar, then combed his black hair. The mirror reflected the image of a husky fellow, with still a great deal about him of the naive young Bohemian who had come here ten years earlier. He was continually the despair of his friend Tony who boasted that he believed nothing and nobody—but which didn't prevent him from being always on the hunt for romantic adventure.

While Tony waited he hummed his favorite tune, Jan joining him:

*Mademoiselle, have you any red wine  
Fit for a soldier up the line?  
Hinky dinky parlez-vous.*

"We should of got a job at the Met," said Tony. "Guys like us shouldn't be wasting our time at the docks."

Jan reached for his hat. "Let's go."

"It's about time.—Hinky dinky parlez-vous," he blared in the hall.

"Quiet!" an indignant voice was heard shouting from Mrs. Blom's quarters on the floor above. "Quiet, I say!"

"Jeeps, is she mad!" Tony whispered, and slunk into the street.

"Now you did it again," Jan reproached him. "I've told you to keep your mouth shut in the hall."

It was a beautiful spring night. Silence, and twilight over the docks. High above them the sky a deep blue. Looking westward the blue was mingled with crimson, and behind the black silhouettes of the Hoboken piers there still glowed a last reflection of the sunset.

"Did you say MacDougal Street?" Jan said.

"Sure. You know Martinetti's. We been there before. They got good stuff."

"I want beer," said Jan. "Hell, I'm a thirsty man, I tell you."

AND BEER HE ORDERED AFTER HE AND TONY SEATED THEMSELVES in Martinetti's dingy little speakeasy. The place was lit by a single lurid lamp pushed thoughtfully into a far corner of the room. The proprietor shuffled up to them, a seedy fellow all hollow eyes, gray and drooping mustache and spotted apron. "Hello, boys," he greeted them with professional affability as he swabbed the table top with a damp rag. "Nice evening. What'll it be?"

"Beer," said Jan.

"Muscatel for me," Tony said.

"Beer . . . muscatel. Oh, we got good muscatel! Ve-ery good. But . . ." He smirked knowingly. "A leetla bite to eat too, maybe?"

Tony winked an eye at Jan. "Yeah, we gotta order some-thin'. Just in case. The cops, you know."

They ordered. The beer and muscatel arrived directly, and Jan drank deeply. Tony tasted the muscatel. "Swell stuff," he said, with a loud smack of his lips. "Jan, you ought to have some."

"Don't want any of your damn wine. . . . Listen—" He turned to Martinetti who stood by the window, peering into the lamplit street. "I want a drink. Got the stuff?"

"Why—sure." Martinetti's smile was gently reproachful at Jan's unintended slur at his establishment. "We got everything. Gin, whisky . . ."

"I want a straight rye."

"Make it two," said Tony, emptying his glass.

The drinks arrived, and also the food. While Jan ate he watched three middle-aged customers at a nearby table, substantial businessmen, pink-faced and oozing with prosperous well-being. Each of them had ordered a Martini, and now they sat there twirling their glasses, out of their element and sheepish, trying hard to feel like real devilish fellows adventuring in the Village.

Tony followed Jan's gaze. "Guys from uptown," he said with a contemptuous snort.

The three citizens looked alarmed.

"Filthy with dough," Tony added, enjoying their discomfort.

Jan grinned.

But now old Martinetti claimed their attention. "Raid!" he whispered, with a sorrowful gesture toward the street where two men were seen emerging from an automobile. One of them wore a felt hat and ordinary street clothes. The other man was in overalls, a lumbering gorilla who carried a sledge hammer in his huge fist. "Look," said Martinetti dolefully as the men paused under a street lamp. "Fifty bucks I pay not to have da fella come here."

"Cop?" said Tony sympathetically.

"Da government agent. Now watcha. They go to Joe's joint."

Everyone watched as the agent and his muscle man climbed the stairs to "Joe's Place," diagonally across the street. They entered through the outside door and disappeared from view. Silence followed. Nothing seemed to happen. But all at once upon the spring evening burst the loud blows of a sledge hammer battering down a door. After that followed an omi-

nous interval of quiet. Only the beguiling call from a saxophone was heard from further down the street. Then there came the crash of breaking glass. And silence again. A few minutes later the government agent and his gorilla reappeared, looking very businesslike and methodical. They flung the sledge hammer into the car and drove off.

"Fifty bucks," hollow-eyed Martinetti murmured bitterly. "You gotta shell out, or . . ." He jerked up his narrow shoulders in a shrug of fatalistic resignation.

The pink-faced businessmen had jumped to their feet the moment the rude sledge hammer shattered the evening quiet. They seemed a little pale around the gills now, paid for their cocktails in nervous hurry and didn't even wait for the change.

"Come again," Tony taunted them as they scrambled out the back way.

The solid citizen glanced anxiously around.

"Aw, scram!" Tony sneered. "I ain't no union organizer. Scram, I say!"

Tony had been right about the muscatel. And Jan found nothing wrong with the whisky, except that having downed his drink he wiped his eyes rather than his mouth.

"Where do we go from here?" Tony said—his purple tie, silk handkerchief and oiled hair partly answering his question.

Jan didn't know. But by coincidence Martinetti had a suggestion, as he discreetly sidled up to their table. "Got an announcement to make," he whispered importantly. "You boys maybe lika da nice leetla girl?"

"Girl! . . ." Tony glanced up with interest and unconsciously touched his purple tie.

"In da basement," Martinetti continued. "Ve-ery special.—Spanish."

"Spanish!" Tony gasped, his full lips falling apart.

Martinetti nodded with proprietary pride. His cautious

glance swept the room, and he put a devout hand over his heart. "Me just tellin' you like one man to another," he said in comradely tones. "Thought maybe you lika know." Then he demurely shuffled off to attend to other customers.

Tony looked round-eyed at Jan. "Spanish!" he repeated. "Hot stuff!"

"Boy, oh, boy!" Jan had a high color. He had been mixing whisky and beer.

The tip of Tony's red tongue slipped along his moist lip while he considered Martinetti's proposition. He gulped down his drink and called for more.

Martinetti brought another glass. "About da girl," he said modestly. "Me no mean harm, of course. Me just tellin' you."

"Sure," said Tony. "We sure appreciate."

He again appealed to Jan. "Spanish," he repeated dreamily. "Can you beat that!"

"Boy, that's something!"

"Let's go down," Tony said with sudden resolution and pulled his purple tie to a bold curve. "Jan, what the hell!"

"Naw, I don't know . . ."

"Listen! Spanish, the guy said. Know what that means?"

"I know, but . . ." He pushed his hair away from his flushed brow. His eyes were cloudy with drink, and an image hovered in his mind. But it was not Spanish. It was golden-haired.

"What you say?" Tony prompted him.

"Naw . . ."

"Okay. I'm going. Chance in a lifetime."

He winked at Martinetti. "How about that dame?" he whispered as the proprietor bent low over him.

"Ve-ery good. I tell da lady. Should I say for two, maybe?" he added with an inquiring glance at Jan.

"No, just one," said Tony apologetically. "My friend ain't feeling so hot tonight."

"Damn lie," Jan shot at him. "I'm feeling fine."

"One then," said Martinetti, averse to be drawn into an argument. He flung out his hand in a depreciatory gesture. "No harm, of course. Me just tell like one man to another."

"Sure," Tony said. "I sure appreciate."

Martinetti shuffled off into a back room, then was heard descending dark stairs.

Tony pulled at his purple tie. He glanced dubiously at Jan. "Now, I'm in for it," he muttered and gulped from his glass.

In a minute Martinetti again hovered by the table and bent confidentially over Tony. "All set," he reported. "Lady waitin'. Sent her compliments."

"Yeah! . . . Okay. Thanks."

Martinetti bowed himself off.

Tony twirled his glass nervously. "Well, Jan. See you tomorrow. Maybe you come over to my place?"

"Maybe," said Jan in slurred and sleepy tones.

"Gotta get going," Tony said. He finished his drink, and buttoned his jacket tight. As he was about to leave a half-scared look came to his face, and he grabbed Jan's glass and emptied that too. He touched his tie and braced himself. Then, escorted by hollow-eyed and mustached Martinetti, he disappeared among the shadows of the back room, and Jan heard him on stairs leading down.

LEFT ALONE JAN ORDERED ANOTHER STRAIGHT WHISKY which he downed at a gulp. Then he paid and left the place. He knocked against the door jamb on his way out, and negotiated the flight of dark iron stairs with some difficulty, but landed safely in half-lit and lantern-lit MacDougal Street.

By day this is a shabby old street with rusty fire-escapes disfiguring the tenement façades. But dusk forgives all. And in the Village dusk achieves magic. It was Saturday night and the balmy spring evening had drawn out many people. Dim lights and lanterns glowed in numerous cafés and tea shops, all straining for the Montparnasse touch to lure—not artists but the tourist trade.

Jan told himself he had drunk too much again. The feverish rhythms of syncopated jazz throbbed in his ears as he barged ahead, past Minetta Lane and West Third. Doodle Doo Doo! Yoo Hoo! A saxophone sobbed deep in the bowels of a basement café, a throaty cello murmured sadly, trumpet and horn blared, and a lone flute sang to a sweet-voiced violin.

For a moment into Jan's whisky-befuddled brain floated a vision of the girl he had found in the morning mist by the barge. But . . . she was in Mrs. Blom's hands now. He dis-



missed her from his mind, and ogled the crowds. All kinds of people. Well-dressed slummers from the suburbs spending money lavishly, for this was the era of Coolidge prosperity; seedy intellectuals sauntering down the street, and simple but voluble Italian working people. Spindle-legged flappers with brief skirts tripped along on stubby toes; their escorts in bell-bottomed trousers, and with hair smoothed to a patent leather sheen. There were long-haired youths of studied shabbiness; pale girls with bobbed straight hair and yellow-green smocks, yet looking more frustrated than emancipated or spiritual. Now and then a preoccupied young man would hurry along with the air of one taking a short-cut home. That might be a genuine artist, beyond pose or pretext, eager to reach his solitary haunt to be alone with his work and his soul.

Everybody seemed to be out tonight. It was a spring evening, and with fervor they jazzed it up. A party of hilarious merry-makers, streaming out from what was humorously called a *tea shoppe*, was singing with gusto: *My God, How the Money Rolls In*.

Jan was plain drunk, and he bumped against both people and lampposts as he cruised along the sidewalk. He stopped on the corner of MacDougal and West Fourth, with Washington Square in front of him. In the nebulous lamplight tender green buds spoke of the eternal renewal. Young couples strolled arm in arm, or sat on the benches making unashamed love. A girl's laughter rippled in the dusk. From off in a side street floated thick-throated African rhythms.

His head spun. There was no telling which was north or south. The Square whirled like a merry-go-round, and when he saw a large cumbersome lighted Fifth Avenue bus rolling slowly through the Arch, he could have sworn it was a ferry moving in the river. "Where the hell am I?" he asked a bunch of people that passed. He grinned apologetically. "Hey, buddy! Where's the river, say?"

He grabbed the fellow's arm, but the support was abruptly

withdrawn, and he almost tumbled to the ground. Leaning against the house wall he saw that he had turned to a group of uptown people, a smart crowd of girls and young men. They eyed him with scorn. One of the fellows called him a bum, and a pretty girl said sneeringly that he was a damn foreigner. The bum part made Jan pretty sore, but that about being a foreigner stabbed at his heart. He had been told that too many times during his years in America. Sure, he knew he didn't belong here. They told him that over and over, so how could he forget it?—Damned foreigner. *Go back where you came from.* . . . He lunged forward with a curse and tried to get at that smart young American who scowled at him. But he missed, and the group drew hastily off down MacDougal Street, the pretty girl glancing back at him with contempt. It hurt him. To hell with the men—pasty-faced bastards, anyhow. But that girl! . . . She was a nicely curved and soft little baby with a pair of legs that made him grow hot all over. Jesus Christ, the way he felt lonely sometimes!

He stood, unsteady, his fist clenched. Then from far off he heard a loud throaty call as a ferry bellowed in the Hudson. He raised his head. The river called to him, warning him: What are you doing among the city folk? You know you don't belong there. Come back.

And he turned around and strode away from the gay Village streets toward the waterfront where he felt at home—and where they wanted him.

A band of light fell across the hall as he stumbled into the house from the dark waterfront street. The door to the girl's room was partly open, and he caught a glimpse of her blonde hair under a floor lamp. She called him as he stood fumbling with the key. "Hello. Is that you?"

He went to her door and looked in, startled at seeing her curled up on the couch, dressed in a flowery kimono. His head was heavy with liquor; still it was plain to him that she had

been sitting there brooding. She had dark shadows under her eyes. But now she smiled. "Come in," she said. "Won't you come in?"

He stepped uncertainly into the room, his hair falling across his brow, for he had lost his hat somewhere during his confused ramblings tonight.

The girl measured him with a swift glance. "Please sit down," she said softly. "I've been alone here all evening."

He took a chair at a respectable distance from her, while conflicting emotions surged within him. Her striking appearance put him on his defense. "She's a lady," he thought. And he was not going to let her humble him. Still his heart went out to this beautiful girl who spoke to him in a friendly voice like an equal. It was balm to him after the rebuff from those bitches over on Washington Square.

She changed position on the couch, and his eyes caught a glimpse of a long, silk-stockinged leg gleaming in the side-slit of the kimono. He quickly turned his eyes away, but sneaked another look.

"Your landlady—what's-her-name—gave me this kimono," said the girl. "She's a kind old soul, isn't she?"

"Sure . . ." He fidgeted under her scrutinizing gaze.

"Tell me your name again."

"Jan."

"Jan—what?"

"Kapas. . . . Jan Kapas."

"Born here?"

"No . . ."

But somehow, with mere silence, she drew from him a fuller answer than he meant to give. "I'm from Bohemia," he said slowly and a bit defiantly.

"How nice." Her little white hand plucked at the embroidered silk flowers on the kimono. An awkward pause followed. Jan squirmed on the chair. The tide in his liquor-flushed mind now turned against the girl. Pretty or not, she asked too damn

many questions. He wanted to go into his own room. He was tired. And this golden-haired kimono baby scared him.

The girl smiled sweetly at him, still he could tell that she was tense behind the agreeable surface. "Where are your folks?" she asked. "Over here?"

"No-o," he said, frowning. "In the old country."

"You've no one here?"

"Well . . . no." He rose on unsteady legs. "Guess I'll hit the hay," he said and took a step toward the door.

She kept looking at him, and he floundered and felt unable to hold his own before her. She came and stood before him, the kimono open at her throat, her bosom snowy-white in the lamplight. "Must you go so soon?" she said, and he had a dim idea that she reached out for him.

But he was confused and angry and wanted to get away from her. "Well," he said, his voice slurred, "I'm feelin' tired."

Her eyes held him. "Thanks for what you did for me."

"Oh, nothin' . . ." He backed away. "Goodnight," he blurted, stalked out of the room, stumbled into his own quarters and closed the door. He pushed his hand against it as if afraid the girl would follow him. Swaying, he crossed the floor and slumped down on the bed, his head in his hands. He thought of the way she looked when he glanced back. She stood with her beautiful drawn face turned to him, just staring, as though her nerves were ready to snap.

He rumbled his hair and cursed under his breath, cursed himself for being such an ass and getting all balled up before a girl. She was a good-looking doll, all right. He glanced at the door, half wishing she would come into his room.

But liquor and excitement got the best of him. He sank back on the pillow, closed his eyes and fell asleep.

MONDAY MORNING ARRIVED WITH CLEAR SKY AND A BRISK wind driving little whitecapped waves across the Hudson. As Jan crossed West Street shortly before eight the air was shaken by the rumblings of trucks and four-horse teams, all heading for the pier gates. Tugboats shrieked. An incoming steamer let go with a hoarse blast.

He took his place in the Shape which was massing outside the gates as usual, the men jostling and exchanging gruff jokes. One chubby Irishman pointed with mock scorn at his buddy. "Lookit that mug!" he chortled. "Washin' hisself in warm water, ye can tell it on him."

The buddy bristled at being charged with such an unmanly habit. "S'help me, God!" he spat. "It's a damn lie. I takes the water cold from the faucet, I does."

"Ho-ho! No, ye don't," insisted the gleeful Irishman. "You sissy, I know fer certain ye're heatin' it."

The Stevedore's appearance put an end to the kidding, and a hush fell on the men. A Swede was boss Stevedore at that time. There he stood, looking around the bull line, a stocky fellow in his late forties, the forefinger missing on his right hand, his tanned face square and simple, eyes blue, and blonde wisps of hair under his cap. Honest Persson he was called

because of bottomless honesty both towards those above and those below him in the Stevedore hierarchy. From his superiors he asked only to be allowed to work steadily and hard. And the job as boss Stevedore he took on the flatly stated condition that he never have any dealings with the hiring system of kick-back and graft. He would pick the best men, and that seemed fair and square. He held his job from year to year because of the respect he commanded from all, and because he got a full day's work out of every man he hired. When a fellow had been picked by Honest Persson he would rather be caught robbing his own grandmother than be seen loafing on the job.

Persson blinked his blue eyes against the morning sun as he called the various gangs. In addition to the regulars he hired a dozen extras, for with one ship at each side of the pier this would be a very busy day. "Get in," he barked, but not unkindly. "Get in an' get goin', boys."

The sailor gangs swarmed on board the *Andromeda*, removing tarpaulins and hatch covers and fixing the hoisting gear. Steam puffed on ship's deck as engines were started.

"Over here! Over here! Step on it, boys!"

Persson lumbered across the cement deck and herded his men toward one side of the shed where a huge port had been hoisted.

"Trucks! Get hand trucks!" he cried, tucking a straw-colored wisp of hair in under his cap. And each with a truck the men lined up at the port opening. *Andromeda's* number two hold contained rubber; the first draft was already dangling high above deck. A yell from the hatchman, and the bales came crashing down on the skids.

Half a dozen men were in line ahead of Jan. Tony was just behind him, today not with purple tie and silk-handkerchief, but in a pair of well-worn overalls.

"How did you make out with that Spanish hotcha?" Jan asked.

Tony held his nose with distaste. "Listen," he said. "I'm gonna have a talk with that bum, Martinetti."

"What happened?"

"Happened?" Tony's large Italian eyes were indignant. "You heard the old faker say *special*, didn't you?"

"Sure. Spanish special."

"Yeah! Well, you should've seen the bitch! Spanish, eh! . . . Listen, I ain't no angel, but there's a limit. I took one look at that dame, and, boy, did I beat it!"

"So you got home early," Jan laughed.

"Early. Naw, I didn't go home. What the hell, the night was still young. Took the sub up to Harlem. Know a swell joint there. Taxi dancing, ya know. So I hopped around with a couple o' dames for a while."

A rubber draft crashed onto the skid. It was Jan's turn now, and he pushed his truck up on the wooden platform, got three rubber bales toppled onto it, backed out and hauled the bales to their tiers where a gang of colored men stacked them up, using their steel hooks with such fabulous dexterity that the rubber bales seemed to have life and volition of their own.

And as usual the Harlem gangs were humming as they worked. The colored fellows shuffled their feet and chanted a melodious popular tune: "*It takes a Long, Tall, Brown-Skin Gal to make a preacher lay his Bible down. . . .*"

Jan pushed his truck against one of the tiers.

"Right, mah boy," said the old tierman, a scraggly fellow named Sam. He winked a wicked eye.

"Atta boy," said Jan and pulled his truck away from the tier. All went smoothly for a while. Rubber drafts rose swiftly out of deep holds. Truck men hauled the bales away. But presently sounds of discord were heard from over one of the tiers. "You goddamn coon!" someone shouted. "I won't take any back-talk from you!"

Everyone turned around. The shrill voice belonged to one of the unemployed from the city, one who had been hired for

the first time that morning, a fat ex-promoter of some sort. Jan had noticed him earlier in the day because his sullen puss seemed to proclaim he was doing the waterside a favor by coming down there to work.

He now confronted scraggly old Sam, shouting insults and putting out his flat chest. It turned out that he had trucked his rubber bales to the wrong tier. Sam told him where the bales belonged. "Numbah 3 A. Next tier."

"Why don't you shift them yourself!" said the city man.

"Too heavy, Mistah. It's easier with the truck."

"Easy, eh?" he scowled. "So that's what you're after?—Easy."

"No, Mistah," said Sam, still with a smile on his battered black face. "But yah got to bring them bales where they belong."

The city fellow grew purple with rage. "Don't tell me what to do!" he yelled. "I take no orders from a goddamn coon!"

By now a crowd of angry truckers had gathered around the tier. "Shut up!" someone called to the trouble-maker. "Keep your trap shut!"

He whirled around, snarling. "Bastards, all of you! Who the hell do you think you are?"

They answered him with jeers. Tony nudged Jan. "That guy won't last long down here."

"The damn smart aleck," said Jan and took a step toward the city man. "Shut up, you punk!" he snapped. "Or I smack you in the eye!"

But now Honest Persson came upon the scene. "What's this?" he cried, with a wave of his arm. "Don't you see the draft's waiting? Hurry up, boys! Hurry up!"

The crowd dispersed, and the sullen city man pulled his truck away. Old Sam turned to his rubber tier. But a gloom had fallen over the Harlem gang, and no one sang about the Long, Tall, Brown-Skin Gal.



ON COMING HOME FROM WORK THAT NIGHT JAN STRIPPED to the waist and began to soap himself at the wash stand. Twilight lingered outside the windows, a soft blue haze that stealthily invaded the river and enveloped the steamers tied up in their slips.

He was buttoning his shirt when he heard a knock on the door. The girl appeared on the threshold. She had on her tight-fitting black dress, and bangles around her wrist. "Hope I don't disturb you," she said, in a voice so humble that Jan felt embarrassed.

"No, not at all," he said. Her smart appearance put him on his defensive at once, in spite of her subdued manner.

She coughed a little as she stepped into the room. "Excuse me for bothering you," she said. "Do you happen to have a cigarette? I'm dying for a smoke."

"Sure. There's a whole package on top of the bureau. Help yourself."

"Thanks." She pulled out a cigarette, struck a match and took a long puff.

"Keep the package," he said. "I can get myself another on my way out."

"Should I? Thanks a lot."

She inhaled, tilted her head back and looked through the window. "What's over there?" she asked, pointing at the opposite shore with the pier sheds, slips and a confusion of derricks and spars. Ships loomed indistinct in the dusk.

"Hoboken. That's the Holland-America Line."

"Oh, is it? I've never been down here before."

He threw a secret glance at her, as she stood with her back to him. Some girl! That tightfitting black dress made her look like a million dollars. A classy baby, he thought. And those gold bangles! She was hot stuff. And, Jesus, did she have a pair of legs! But he decided grimly he wouldn't give her any chance to snub him. She would probably yell bloody murder if he made just a little innocent pass at her. Or maybe she would give him one of those cold looks which he feared more than anything from a girl. Nope! He had his pride!

She turned around and stood with her slim form outlined against the dusk, smoke curling upward from the cigarette, while she looked at him, a little puzzled, her eyes narrowed. "Aren't you going to ask me where I come from, and what I'm doing down here, and all that?"

"No, Miss."

"No? . . ."

"It's none of my business."

She was taken aback at first, then smiled slowly. "Don't call me Miss," she said. "Sounds so formal. My name is Karen."

"Okay . . ."

"And your name is Jan. I like it." A dry cough interrupted her, and she put her little white hand on her chest.

Jan looked concerned. "You caught cold," he said. "Was afraid you would. It was raw down by that barge."

"Oh, serves me right. I went out for a whiff of air today. And I've no coat, so I made things worse."

Stepping to the bureau she picked up a framed photograph of a young girl on a white horse. "Doesn't she look sweet," she exclaimed. "Who is she?"

"Oh . . . a girl from back home."

She studied the picture intently for a moment, put it down and lit another cigarette. "I'll just smoke one more," she said, "then I'll leave you."

He floundered around and tried to keep himself busy.

"Working hard on the ships?" she asked, knocking the cigarette ashes into a tray.

"Well—got to keep going." Once more he felt that she reached out for him in some way. But again he was determined not to give her a chance to snub him.

She blew out a cloud of smoke, walked over to the window and stood gazing out. The twilight had deepened; stars glimmered in the sky. A tugboat was slowly gliding downstream, but the craft itself could hardly be seen. Only the lights. The port binnacle threw an undulating ribbon of scarlet on the dark stream.

After Karen had gone, Jan went out to buy himself another package of cigarettes. He met a couple of dock hands, and stood on the street corner talking for a while, then went upstairs and began to undress. Tomorrow would be a busy day at the pier.

He took off his coat and unlaced his shoes. But then a thought struck him. That girl—she was catching cold, and she needed a coat. He could easily lend her the money, for he had a small wad of bills tucked away in the bureau drawer. He had meant to take the money to the bank for several weeks now, but had put the matter off. It didn't seem right that she should risk her health while he had money lying idle.

So he laced his shoes again and took a few bills from the drawer. He put the money into an envelope, stepped out in the hall and knocked on Karen's door.

She was getting ready for bed. When she saw him she pulled the kimono around her. "Oh, you!" she cried softly. "Why! . . . Come in."

He entered, embarrassed at having come upon her in such scanty attire. "Just wanted you to have this," he said and thrust the envelope into her hand. "Buy yourself a coat."

She took a peep inside the envelope. "Oh, but . . . no!" she protested. "It's too much."

"You got to have a coat," he insisted, retreating a step and reaching for the door knob. "Pay me back when you can. No hurry. I don't need the money until I go home next fall."

She weighed the envelope in her hand. "Should I really? . . . You're awfully nice. Thanks a lot. I'll get a coat then. And we'll go out together some evening, won't we?"

"Out! . . . Well, okay."

He turned from her, mumbled a "Goodnight" and backed into the hall, the girl looking after him with a smile.

ANOTHER FINE SPRING DAY CAME AROUND, WITH BRIGHT sunshine and a brisk wind from the sea.

Jan shaped up at the pier. Work got under way, and more freight was hoisted out of *Andromeda's* holds. Rubber and coffee sacks as usual. And a great quantity of Argentine hides to be hauled off to the Newark tanneries, the leather then going to the shoe factories of New England and Connecticut.

Reloading of the ship began as soon as the holds were emptied and cleaned, for the shed was overcrowded with outbound freight. More cargo was being brought from across the river. Except for goods delivered by truck, or by water route from the Great Lakes via the Barge Canal and the Hudson, freight is brought to the city by thirteen railroads. Eleven of these terminate in Jersey, where trains arrive from the West and Middle West, bringing foodstuffs for the teeming millions of New York, and export freight for overseas. In season, fruit from the Pacific Coast. Frozen meat, ham, bacon and lard from the meat packeries of Chicago. Copper from the Michigan mines. Automobiles from the monster factories of Detroit.

"Copper! Give a hand with the copper! Come along, boys!" Honest Persson bustled along the driveway, with a waddling

gait like a big duck, as he picked the men he wanted for this special job. The barge with copper bars was moored alongside the *Andromeda* out there in the slip, and four strong fellows were needed for the unloading.

"You!" Persson called, picking a man here, and "You!" he summoned another veteran. Handling copper was a tough and dangerous job, not to be entrusted to just any city slicker who happened to be around.

"Jan," he cried. "You better get down on that barge. Copper! . . . Be careful, boy! Careful, I say!"

Jan joined the other men picked for the copper work.

"Chains! Chains!" Persson called into the uproar on the pier, and two of his men hustled to the storeroom for chains to be used for the hoisting of the copper bars.

Having climbed down on the barge the men had a short breathing spell, and straightened their backs. Besides Jan there were three others, for they would work in two shifts, one man at either end of a bar. Two of the other men were Czechs whom Jan knew well. The third fellow was an Irishman, also a veteran longshoreman, tall, spare and genial Mike Hennessy.

Mike yawned while they waited for the chains. "Lost out on me sleep last night," he said to Jan. "One o' me kids bawling till the wee hours of the mornin'."

"Sick?"

"Cuttin' her teeth. It's the baby."

The two Czechs watched the river traffic while making the most of this short rest. A sturdy tug, with foam dashing against its shaggy prow, came chugging along with a string of barges in tow, names of railroads painted in big letters on the sides: Erie—Lackawanna. Another tug, without tow, hurried fussily in the opposite direction, flaunting a coat of scarlet paint and a bright green band around the funnel. A plume of smoke trailed behind. "Tut-tut," it greeted its hardworking colleague.

"Tut," said the latter gruffly and puffed on, with straining towline and madly churning screw.

"Okay. Chains!" Persson shouted down from the *Andromeda's* deck.

He was standing by the rail up there. The chains arrived, and he watched the gang getting started. A chain was stretched out on the barge deck, then the copper bars were lifted on top of it. Ten bars to a draft. The chain was pulled tight, hooked on to a tackle and raised aloft by a winch.

It was backbreaking work, and the men perspired heavily in spite of the cool April breeze. "Good boys," Persson muttered to himself up there at the rail. Then he lapsed into reverie, no one guessing that his mind had turned from the bustle around him, to his two little girls who now were in school studying their English and geography. He had helped them with their lessons last night, and tough it had been for him, sleepy after a hard day. A widower since several years, all the interest of his life now centered around his work here on the pier and his two little daughters at home. Every bright Sunday morning he would stroll along the docks with them, one by each hand, two sweet-faced and shy children of ten and twelve, blue-eyed and with yellow hair streaming down their backs. "And never shall scissors touch that hair," the proud father would vow on stopping to talk to an acquaintance.

Down on the barge the four sweating men struggled with the copper bars. Draft after draft was hoisted aloft, with steel wire and tackle raising the heavy clusters of bars as though they were of inconsequential weight.

Having stacked up a fresh draft, Jan and Mike Hennessy fastened the chain to the tackle hook. "Okay," Jan cried, waving to the hatchman up on ship's deck. The winch snorted a cloud of white steam. The chain pulled tight around the bars, and the draft rose swiftly aloft.

"Well, I guess we better start on that other batch there,"

Jan said to Mike, while straightening his back and taking a deep breath of the salt river air.

"Right ye are," said Mike with a yawn. "Joseph and Mary, I'm sleepy!"

Then a sudden frenzied yell from up on the steamer's deck caused Jan to jump to one side. "Watch out!" someone roared. "Jesus Christ, watch out down there!"

But before the warning was finished heavy bars came hurtling down about the men, striking the barge deck with loud thuds and splintering the wood. And in that soul-sickening moment Jan heard another scream, this time from right behind him on the barge—a scream of anguish and pain, followed by the sound of a falling body. Whirling around he saw Mike lying on deck, his face ashen under the suntan, and blood gushing from the shreds of his right boot which had been squashed by the impact of a dropping copper bar.

Jan was at Mike's side in an instant, lifting the Irishman's head in his arms. The two Czechs also bent over the unconscious man. A shrill whistle howled up on *Andromeda's* deck, and the cry was raised for an ambulance.

Persson fairly threw himself down the rope ladder on ship's side, then ran aboard the barge, grief-stricken and in despair that this should have happened to one of his men. "I saw the chain slip," he nearly wept, turning to Jan. "I yelled at you."

"Yes, I know . . ."

"Haven't I told you never to stand under the draft when it goes aloft!"

"Yes, yes."

Someone brought a pail of water, dabbed at Mike's face and tried to force a little water between his lips. His eyes were closed, his face yellowish and drawn.

"Jesus Christ!" Persson moaned, nauseated as he looked at Mike's squashed foot from which blood poured and formed a little red pool on the barge deck. "Look at that! He'll never be able to walk on that foot again as long as he lives!"



JAN WAS STILL SHAKEN WHEN PERSSON BLEW HIS WHISTLE for the lunch hour. Climbing up on ship's deck he met Tony, and they walked toward the gates. "Thought it was you at first," the Italian said. "Jesus, I got scared."

"I had luck."

"Knock wood," said Tony, rapping his knuckles on the side of a truck.

"Damn right. Never know what's ahead."

"Poor Mike. And him with half a dozen kids. What'll he do now?"

"He'll get some compensation, won't he?"

Tony laughed cynically. "Compensation, my eye! It's a god-damn racket like everything else. Don't you remember when Frank got his leg crushed out in Brooklyn? Remember those two lawyers that popped up and said they'd help him? Sure, they were a great help. Sued the shipyard and got five thousand bucks for Frank. Then one of those shysters took two thousand of Frank's blood money, and the other crook a thousand, and the doctor—I don't remember how much. All Frank ever got was three hundred shekels, plus a wooden leg. It was a good leg, though. I seen him stumping around on it, selling shoe strings."

"I guess Mike will never walk on that foot again."

"Well, those fee-splitting bastards won't do nothin' for him. All Mike will ever get is a limp."

"Hell, it's tough on him."

"Tough, you said it. We gotta do something."

Stepping into the blinding sunshine of West Street they dodged a fleet of jouncing trucks. "We gotta do something," Tony repeated. "Listen—let's talk to Persson about it. He's a good kind."

"Okay."

They entered "Pete's Lunch Room," crowded with long-shoremen, blasphemous truck drivers and teamsters sitting around the sloppy tables or crowding at the counter. The place was full of noise, talk, profanity and raucous laughter, the air thick with tobacco smoke and the smell of greasy food.

Jan nodded to Pete, the proprietor, as he pushed his way among the eating customers and found a not too crowded table. With the aid of a little good will it might accommodate one or two more.

The good will was supplied by a husky old Irishman, a red-faced and bushy-haired veteran. "Come on, me boys," he grunted, lowering the newspaper he was reading, and pulling his chair to one side. "Sure, always room for one more, says the devil. Hell is niver too crowded, says he."

Tony slapped the Irishman's back. Both he and Jan knew Pat Mulligan well. They flopped down on the chairs, and Pat continued reading his paper, a copy of the *Journal-American*. The contents seemed to agitate him greatly, for he muttered angrily and shook his head, and even stuck out his tongue at the absent editorial writer as though the wretch stood before him in the flesh.

"Listen," Jan said to Tony. "You watch my place here, an' I'll order for both of us. What you want?"

"Meatballs and spaghetti."

"Okay."

On looking around him, Jan saw a couple of the city fellows seated at a nearby table. Among them was Maxwell, the ex-promoter who had insulted old Sam the other day. Maxwell recognized Jan with a frown, and his hostile eyes followed him to the counter.

A dish in each hand, Jan returned to the table. He tackled his food with a big appetite, ravenously hungry after the morning's work with the copper bars. Pat was still reading his paper, puckering his brow at the editorial. Suddenly with a roar he crumpled the paper in his hand. "The blasted fool!" he cursed. "It's more'n I can stomach, faith an' that's the truth!"

"What's the matter?" said Jan. "Something in the paper?"

"Damn r-right, there's somethin' in the paper," Pat growled in disgust. "I'll tell ye what's wr-rong down here at the docks. We don't work hard enough!"

Jan stared. Tony halted a forkload of spaghetti halfway to his mouth.

Pat seemed to derive a devilish pleasure from their bewilderment. He rumbled his graying red mane, leaned back in the chair and threw one leg across the other. "Sure. You boys iver thought o' that? We ought to work harder—much har-rder'n we do."

"Guy's gone crazy," Tony said.

Pat's seraphic smile showed all his tobacco-stained teeth. "Cr-razy, eh?" he said in dangerously soft tones. "Right ye are, me boy, but not quite. Somebody be cr-razy, only it ain't old Pat."

He spread the *Journal's* editorial page before Jan's eyes and smoothed the crumpled sheet with his gnarled longshoreman's hand. "Read the gr-reat words of the President. Coolidge be his name. R-read, I says, and judge fer yerself."

Jan read a few lines, and laughed. "Tony, this is rich. Listen to what Coolidge says: Hard work is the cure for all America's ills. He says everyone should work harder."

"Much har-rder," said grim-faced Pat.

"No foolin'?" said Tony, his eyes innocent and round. "Does he say anything about the unemployed? Say anything about how hard they should work?"

"Much har-rder," said Pat.

"He don't say," Jan chuckled.

"No? . . . Does he say how hard you should work on a copper barge?"

"Much har-rder," said Pat.

Tony pretended to be more and more puzzled. He rolled his black eyes. "But when you've been at it all day and then all night to get a ship out . . . what I mean is—when it gets to be around three or four in the morning, does he say how hard . . ."

"Har-rder," said stony-voiced Pat.

Tony scratched his head and put on a big show. "Know what I think? That guy's just screwy."

"Screwy is right," said Jan.

Someone pushed a fist between his shoulder blades. And as he looked around, who was there but Maxwell, the city man, red as a lobster in the face. "I heard you!" he spluttered, shaking his fist under Jan's nose. "You bastard, I heard you!"

"Heard what?" said Jan, pushing the fist away.

"What you said about the President."

"Aw, go on."

"Listen!" Maxwell pounded his chest. "I'm a hundred-percent American, and I won't stand for it."

"Sit then. Relax."

The crowd laughed. Pat chuckled as he watched Maxwell shake his fist in the air.

"Why don't you pipe down?" said Jan, rising from the table and warding Maxwell off. "You always look for trouble."

"I'm a hundred-percent . . ."

"Sure, sure. We know." He caught Tony's eye. They walked toward the door.

"Who do you think you are?" Maxwell yelled after him. "A

lousy foreigner. Why don't you go back where you came from?"

Jan stopped dead short. White-faced, he turned around.

Tony saw what was coming, stepped in front of him and tried to hold him back. "Get out of here!" he cried to Maxwell. "Clear out, for God's sake!"

Maxwell was quick enough to see that he had scored a bull's-eye shot. "You lousy foreigner!" he yelled again, triumphantly. "Get the hell back where you came from!"

His shoulders hunched, Jan brushed Tony aside, kicked over a chair, lunged forward, and with all his force behind his fist punched Maxwell squarely on the chin.

The blow hurled the fellow backwards across a table among clattering dishes and spilled food. The whole lunch room was thrown into an uproar, but no one took Maxwell's part, for he had managed to make himself thoroughly disliked. Old Pat clapped his hands joyfully. "Lovely, me lad!" he cried. "Lovely. Reminds me of the time when . . ."

But no one was to know what lovely memories Jan's blow had evoked from Pat's fighting youth, for Jan was swept away by his wrath. Maxwell crawled to his feet, dazed, bloody-lipped, yet still snarling. Jan made for him once more, but half a dozen powerful hands grabbed him and held him back.

His forward rush was broken for an instant, then he struggled free, and stood almost within reach of his enemy. Maxwell glanced at him, frightened. There was a split second in which Maxwell could act. He snatched the longshoreman's hook from his belt, threw the steel hook at Jan's face, then ran for the door.

The hook struck Jan above his left eye. Blood at once flowed profusely. Now nothing could hold him back. He struck at those who tried to hinder him, and leaped forward, following Maxwell who pressed himself in among the tables and chairs in a frantic effort to escape. But Jan grabbed him by the collar, pulled him upright and struck him again and again.

It was all over in a minute. Maxwell was lying among the broken dishes on the floor. Jan swayed on his feet, dazed with anger, and blinded by the blood from his cut eye.

Pete, the proprietor, came with a wet rag and swabbed his face. "What the devil d'you mean wrecking my place," he grouched. Jan was an old friend of his. "Look what a mess!"

"I'll pay for it," Jan muttered groggily.

"Damn right, you will," said Pete, dabbing at the cut. "Listen, you better have a doctor take a stitch there. Looks pretty bad."

A couple of dock hands dragged Maxwell onto a chair. He was bloody, battered and disheveled. His head wobbled. "He's alive, however," Pat pronounced sagely. "And he'll live."

He studied Maxwell profoundly for a moment. "The lad's got things a bit wr-rong," he said, slowly filling his pipe. "We're all foreigners here, and I doubt whether any of our noble ancestors arrived in that gr-reat ship, the *Mayflower*. Square-heads, Polacks, colored fellows an' Wops. Sure, an' I'm Irish meself. The docks be the international part of America. A man's a man here, faith an' that's true. All we ask is can he mind his own business and handle a car-rgo hook?"

Jan followed Tony out of the lunch room and over to the nearby drug store. He made a horrible face while iodine was brushed into the cut. Then he asked for a wad of gauze, and a bit of plaster to hold it in place.

As they left the store a shrill whistle was heard from the direction of the pier gates—the Stevedore's five-minute call for the Shape to stand by. "Just made it," Tony grunted as they turned into West Street and took their customary places in the bull line. Honest Persson blew the one o'clock signal, then began to pick his afternoon crew. "*You, and you,*" he selected his men, waving at them with his mutilated hand.

"And *you!*" he summoned Jan, frowning at his bandaged eye. "What the hell 'ave you been doin'? . . . Get in," he growled. "Get down on that copper barge."

THE COPPER UNLOADED, THE EMPTY BARGE WAS TOWED off across the Hudson by a brightly painted tugboat. A covered barge arrived with large crates of corn flakes, and now refrigerated cars with frozen meat and lard were floated into the slip. The freight was cleared in a hurry; winches chugging up on ship's deck, cargo booms swinging to and fro, the foremen shouting to their men.

Lighters came alongside, loaded with stuff for the yawning holds of the ship. Trucks and teams drove into the shed with still more freight. It all went into the voracious holds.

Then it was evening once more. A whistle called the work to a halt, the men straightened their backs, reached for their jackets and trooped out of the shed. From all along the waterfront were heard the sounds of ceasing work; of five o'clock whistles; winches spinning softly in free gear, then running to a stop; steam petering off to a last hissing breath.

After Jan had eaten his supper in a lunch room he walked leisurely to his lodgings. Spring was in the air. A warm breeze blew. The sun hung like a flaming ball above the Hoboken docks.

He retired early that night, not having seen either Karen or his landlady. But one evening a few days later Mrs. Blom called to him, and he went up and said hello.

She turned the gas low under the frying pan. "Jan," she said, "there's something I must talk to you about."

"Shoot."

"That girl down there—have you given her money?"

"Well . . . I lent her a little."

She narrowed her eyes. "Why should you?"

"Well, she was coughing and . . ."

"I know something about that coughing," she interrupted him. "Tell me, are you taken in by her?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean."

"Hell, no. She needed a coat, that's all."

"I wish I could believe you. I don't want you to get into a jam."

"Oh, don't worry about that."

"Hope it is as you say. But she's getting under my skin, the way she acts. Coughing, you say. All day long she sits down there, smoking one cigarette after the other, and I don't hear a cough. It's when she hears you open the door that she begins to feel so poorly."

"But she was coughing real bad the other day."

Mrs. Blom snorted. "Keep your wits about you, that's all I ask."

"Sure, sure."

"And don't think I'm hard," she said as she went back to the stove. "I want to do what I can for her. But she could at least show some appreciation. Instead of helping me a little around the house, there she sits all day. The room is full of smoke. But . . . so long as you don't get yourself mixed up with her. That's what has been worrying me."

Karen's door was open as Jan passed it. A haze of cigarette smoke filled the room: "Jan, is that you?" she called. "Come, I'll show you something."

She ran to meet him. "Guess what I bought," she cried



gaily, took his hand and pulled him into the room. She flew to the closet and brought out a dark blue spring coat carefully draped over a hanger. She held it up for him to see and admire. "Isn't it beautiful?"

"It sure is."

She put it on and turned around so that he might view her from all sides. "Jan, isn't it grand? And it's all thanks to you."

"Oh, forget it."

"Wait!" she whispered, her slender forefinger raised. "I've something more to show you." She stepped to the closet for a second time and took out a hat which she put on before the mirror. Wheeling around she waited bright-eyed for his approval.

"Stunning, I'll say."

She ran up to him and kissed him on the cheek. "Do you know what?" she said, breathless. "Let's go out tonight."

"Well . . ."

"Please!"

"Okay then."

"Good. You go and get ready."

WHEN THEY STARTED OUT KAREN WAS BAREHEADED, BUT dressed in her new coat. "I'll go without a hat," she said, winking an eye. "No use getting the old lady excited again."

In the street she looked Jan up and down critically and gave his tie a little push. "So, that's better." She squeezed his arm affectionately. "You don't mind, do you?" she smiled, chatting away like a school girl on a frolic. "Wonderful evening, isn't it?"

They halted on the street corner, hesitating as to direction. Jan nodded toward the river. "Let's go out on the pier. Back of the market is a nice place to sit."

"Oh! . . . All right!" He didn't catch her startled look nor her disappointed glance citywards, at the skyscrapers and the bright lights.

But this was only a momentary fluttering. She gave his arm another squeeze. "You're a nice guy," she murmured. "I like you."

When Jan spoke of the market he referred to the old red brick buildings of West Washington Market, headquarters of commission merchants who supply restaurants and hotels with provisions. The small block of structures is splattered with signs of "Meats" and "Live Poultry," and is a paradise for

prowling cats who live in a constant savage hope of getting their claws into one of the clucking chickens in the coops. A rank smell of meat and offal is mixed with the salty river air.

The whole market is a miniature town with a narrow lane called Lawton Avenue cutting through the center, and several Liliputian cross streets between the quaint structures—Cansevoort Street, Grace Avenue, Thompson, Hewitt and Low.

Back of the market a few rotting piers jut out into the river, and there tugs and sand barges tie up to be in readiness when a ship wants help or needs gravel for ballast. A fire boat, too, used to be moored there: the *Thomas Willet*, at the foot of Little West Twelfth Street, handling about a fire a week in the neighborhood docks. The old piers are now condemned by the government, but in the old days, on spring and summer evenings, folk from the neighborhood liked to come there to watch the river. Half a dozen people were already on the pier as Jan and Karen strolled out on it.

They sat down on the wooden stringpiece, Karen with her back against a cast-iron bitt. Near them was a youth with his arm around a girl, both of them watching enraptured as the sun sank behind the Hoboken piers.

A ponderous ferry floated by out in midstream. "Where is that going?" Karen asked.

"To Twenty-third Street," said Jan. "There's another one. See it up the river? That's the Weehawken boat."

"How well you know them."

"Oh, I've been hanging around here for a good many years."

The sun went down, and for a brief moment the sky burned crimson above the tree-clad height of Castle Point. Hoboken's Stevens Institute is by day a modest building, but against this flaming sky the stone structure took on heroic proportions. It now seemed like an ancient stronghold raised above this tidal river long before it was invaded by men of the Steel Age. Now these late-comers have built ferry slips, railway terminals, shipyards, and piers where once virgin wilderness reigned su-

preme. The *River of Ebb and Flow*, the Indian's *Mai-kan-e-tuk*, has become the busiest freight center in the world.

The sunset faded to a darkening blue, yet a flock of high-flying clouds caught the last fire of the sun. Then twilight came. The people on the pier spoke in hushed tones. The youth sat with his arm around the girl, both oblivious to the rest of the world.

The dusky river swarmed with craft. Two great ferries met out in midstream, their lighted deck houses at prow and stern and their many glittering lights making the craft look like pagodas floating in a twilight sea of the Orient. They greeted each other gravely with throaty calls.

"The tide is coming in," Jan remarked.

"How do you know?" She looked into the water.

"It's easy. You see those little waves there. If the wind was driving them they'd be whitecapped. The push comes from underneath."

Then he pointed to a tugboat pulling a string of loaded barges out in the stream. "Cut stone. From Haverstraw. Captain been timing himself to get advantage of the tide."

"You like the river, don't you?" she said and took his hand, while watching the scarlet portlight of the tug.

"Sure. I'm used to it. Same thing in the old country. Lived right by the river."

"Did you say you're planning to go back?"

"Next fall, maybe."

"That girl on the picture—do you love her?"

"Yes—well, I haven't seen her for many years, though."

Her lips curled. "I think it's just her memory you love."

He was startled. A grave expression came to his face.

Karen smiled to herself, then began to talk of other matters. "Something funny happened to me the other night. I was feeling lonely, so I went down here for a while. A cop came up to me. Look here, he said. You don't figure on jumping in, do you? . . . Now, why did he ask me that?"

"Oh, the Village is near by. All sorts of queer people live there. Sometimes they go nuts and come down here and jump in. Happens a lot."

She looked into the black water lapping against the piles. "Drown myself!" she said with a shudder. "No, I wouldn't have the nerve. I've always been afraid to die."

"It's a sin to take your own life."

"Yes, but if it gets to be a burden to you?"

He shook his head. "No, no . . . it's wrong to speak that way. I believe one should try and make the best of things. And you never know—everything might seem dark and hopeless one day, and then . . . there's a turn in the road."

"I like to hear you talk," she said softly.

It had grown dark around them, and with the coming of night the river's aspect changed. Gone was the ugliness produced by a commercial age—rusting iron sheds, piers, factory chimneys and junk. Now the illuminated shores and colored lights in the stream turned the river territory into a world of beauty and splendor. Light clusters flashed along the Jersey shore. The Hoboken Heights apartments were invisible, but a thousand windows glowed behind the mist. And also northward in Weehawken the sky was full of lights, bright and dusky yellow, trailing off on the summit of the Palisades, away beyond Guttenberg and Edgewater, until lost in the nightly obscurity of the river's upland course.

Karen spoke: "Jan, you're queer. You never ask me any questions."

"Well, why should I?"

"Most people want to know all about one."

"Your life is your own."

"That's true, isn't it? And you must pay for your own mistakes."

She gazed at the dusky ships in the river. "I was born in Norway," she said in a low voice. "It all seems so far away now."

"Ever plan to go back?"

"Oh, no. I can only *think* of Norway—and all the things that were mine once."

She continued to gaze dreamily at the stream where green and ruby lights glowed. Bright masthead lamps were stars floating in the night, the shadowy craft nocturnal beings pursuing a mysterious course, obscure to the watchers on shore.

"Thinking?" said Jan.

She gave a start. "Yes . . . thinking of Norway, and all I've lost."

"Don't think of what you've lost. You're young. Why don't you have a little faith in the years ahead?"

Her voice trembled. "Somehow I cannot believe . . ."

"You could try," he said gently.

A tugboat glided swiftly out of the dark and moored alongside the next pier. The mastlights nodded with the river swell. Vague shapes of the crew busied themselves on deck.

"It is getting cold," Karen said, wrapping the coat around her.

"We'd better go, then."

As they rose a young seaman aboard the tugboat started to sing:

*Let me call you sweetheart, I'm in love with you.*

*Let me hear you whisper that you love me too. . . .*

This had been sung to shreds many millions of times, yet now the young seaman invested the words with a deep and true meaning. He did not merely sing to pass the time; he sang for some *one*, although she could not hear him.

Jan and Karen walked slowly to the shore-end of the pier, along tiny Gansevoort Street and back to the house.

In the hallway Karen kissed Jan's cheek. "Thanks for to-night," she said. "It was sweet."

Then she went in and closed the door.

BY THURSDAY THE PIER SHED WAS CRAMMED WITH FREIGHT for the *Andromeda*, but trucks, wagons and carts continued to rumble toward the gates from all directions. The piles of boxes and crates grew still higher in the shed. Round about the ship in the dock was a surging confusion of barges and pushing tugs, all trying to edge alongside. Shrieks of whistles filled the air.

At five o'clock in the evening Honest Persson came with an order for night work to get the ship trimmed before the weekend. "Go get your supper!" he shouted. "Then come right back."

Jan and Tony scrambled into the lunch room with the other fellows, got their food at the counter, and flopped down at a sloppy table. A loud salvo from half a dozen riveting machines was heard from outside, from over in the slip where the *Andromeda* was docked.

Tony glanced out. "They'll make it," he said. "Them shipyard guys. Been at it all night."

Jan nodded. Riveters and mechanics were working at a furious pace in the slip. For on entering the harbor in the morning fog the *Andromeda* had collided with an outbound ship and got her port bow stowed in. She ought to have been towed

to a shipyard, but the loss of time would have been too great. Where ships sail and steamers dock and load, time flows in a precious silver stream, what with port and harbor dues in addition to the long list of other expenses, such as tugboats, pilotage, stevedoring, fuel, and wages for the crew—not to speak of interest on invested capital, amortization, insurance and upkeep. Shorten a ship's dead time in port a day or two, and a small fortune is saved for the owners. Haul the *Andromeda* to a shipyard? . . . Never, if it possibly could be helped! But bring a shipyard to the *Andromeda*. Call the repair men! Bring the welders! Summon the riveters! Steel workers rigged up a scaffolding around her bows before the ship had been docked more than an hour. Men with acetylene torches burned out the old rivets, and the bow plates were removed as soon as the unloading raised the hull a yard out of the water. Bent steel ribs and girders were quickly straightened, and new plates riveted on. Welding torches blew cascades of fiery sparks, and riveting machines thundered as the shipyard men raced against time. For outgoing cargo was poured into each hold the moment the space was emptied of incoming freight, cleaned, inspected and okayed. In a day or two the lower section of the damaged part would again be below the waterline.

The rat-a-tat of riveting machines was like guns on a battlefield. Out in the street bouncing trucks roared like cannon. Tony wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "About Mike," he said. "I spoke to Persson. We gotta help him out," he says. "We'll all chip in a few bucks. Tide him over the worst, anyway."

"Okay. Count me in."

Tony shoved his cap onto the back of his curly head. "Heard about Persson? What he did?"

"No. What?"

"He's a goof." Tony grinned and showed his white teeth as



he told Jan the story—only an incident, but indicating how Persson had earned his nickname: “The Honest.”

It happened a day or two after Mike’s accident. In the Chief Stevedore’s office, shirt-sleeved, and rolling his enormous bulk in a groaning swivel chair, sat heavy-jowled James McCarthy, lord of the pier and boss of them all, common longshoremen, gang bosses, foremen, stevedores. Imperious McCarthy boasted that he recognized no superior but the Port of New York Authority, and because he was infallible in his job no one ever dared contest his extravagant claim.

So there he sat before his cluttered desk, smoking a big black cigar while studying consignors’ orders, bills of lading and charts that told him exactly, down to the merest packet of cornflakes, just what cargo would go into the *Andromeda’s* holds, and into *which hold* it would go, and precisely into *what spot* of that hold. This was really responsibility far beyond McCarthy’s call of duty. For in port the Captain of a ship charges his First Mate with the proper care and disposition of freight. And when the loading plan is drawn the Chief Stevedore is given orders as to desirable operations. Only, McCarthy refused to take orders. He demanded to be in on the *why* and the *wherefore*. He was much too big—physically and otherwise—and much too smart to be ordered around by any young up-and-coming mate. McCarthy had been to sea himself in his day, and had been a First Mate and even Captain for smaller craft, and knew more about ships and cargoes than any man either on this or the other side of the Atlantic. At least that was his own estimate of himself. And while there had been irritated and self-important First Mates who called old McCarthy a bloody meddler, they soon found that the man had an uncanny ability to mind other people’s business as well as his own.

There he sat in his office, when the door crept open and Honest Persson edged inside, pulled off his cap and waited humbly to be spoken to.

McCarthy swung the complaining swivel chair around and glared at his boss Stevedore. "What you want?" he boomed, his voice competing successfully with the infernal noise from the pier.

Persson shifted nervously on his feet. His Swedish blue eyes looked worried, and his leathery face showed gloom. "I'd like to talk to you, sir," he said, twirling his cap.

"Talk!" roared McCarthy, chewing his black cigar. "Man, we got no time to talk. What's the matter?"

Persson stared at the floor, his tousled blonde hair giving him the look of a morose, lumbering boy. "I want to resign," he said in funereal tones.

"Resign! . . ." The lord of them all pulled the cigar out of his mouth and stared at his Stevedore in amazement. McCarthy's foremen never resigned. They had good jobs. He fired them on occasion—and quickly took them back in favor again. Otherwise they resigned only when summoned by the authority of Almighty God.

"What's gotten into you?" McCarthy bawled, and wiped his sweating face. "Sick or somethin'?"

"No-o . . ."

"So why are you wastin' my time?"

Persson gloomily studied his stump of forefinger and explained how things were with him. His conscience troubled him because of Mike's accident. He felt maybe it was his fault. He had not been able to sleep since that copper bar fell on Mike's foot. He felt he ought to resign.

"Listen here! . . ." The tormented swivel chair threatened a breakdown as McCarthy rolled his bulk forward, his pudgy finger pointing at the Swede. "Listen!" he bawled, "what in blazes has Mike's accident got to do with you? Hell, man, you ain't a nursemaid, are you?"

"No, but . . ."

"Don't but me!"

"But . . ." Persson rocked on his feet, his blue eyes still moody with self-reproach.

McCarthy chewed his cigar to a frazzle. "And now, for the love of God, what is it?"

"Thought maybe . . . maybe you're not satisfied with me," Persson unburdened himself. "So I thought . . ."

"Don't think!" said McCarthy savagely. "Get out of here! Go out and get those men working! That's what you're hired for. I'll do the thinking. Understand?"

"Yes, sir." The shadow passed from Honest Persson's face. He had confessed—whatever there had been for him to confess. And the feeling of guilt had been lifted from his broad chest.

"Thanks," he mumbled, shuffling his feet and pawing confusedly for the door knob.

"Wait," McCarthy snapped.

Persson threw an anxious glance back.

"I got reports on you."

"Reports? . . ."

"Yeah, reports." He made a dramatic gesture at the papers littering his desk. "And they're all damn good."

Persson blinked.

"And now get out o' here!"

"Yes, sir."

"Go and jump in the dock, you and your conscience."

"Yes, sir. Thanks a lot."

He stumbled out of the office, stopped in the pier shed to pull himself together, fished a big handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his flustered face. He shook himself, as one shakes off something oppressive, then squared his shoulders and threw back his head. And buoyantly he strode along the thunderous driveway, rocking mightily on his feet, dodging teams and trucks. "Okay, boys!" he cried to his gangs, a twinkle in his Swedish blue eyes. "Hurry up, you lazy pinochle players! Hurry up! Hurry up!"

"Sure," Tony said. "He chipped in ten bucks for Mike."

"Ten!"

"Ten is right. He's okay. We'll all chip in some."

"Count me in."

Jan fell back in his own thoughts. He was remembering something Karen said to him the night before. "It is only her memory you love."

He tried to tell himself that she was wrong. Yet he felt disturbed. But then he pushed it all out of his mind, and leaning back in the chair he tried to rest up a little before the night shift set in.

THE MEN WORKED UNTIL LONG PAST MIDNIGHT. AFTER A short rest they shaped up at eight again and worked all the next day, and on into the following night, until three o'clock Saturday morning. Jan's eyes were leaden-heavy as he walked home in the early dawn. Dead tired, he threw himself on his bed and slept like a log until noon.

He had been down to the dock for his pay envelope when he met Mrs. Blom in the hall. She looked grim and tight-lipped, and he wondered what she was so mad about.

In his room he flopped into a chair to read the *New York Times* which he had bought on his way home from the pier. The *Times* gave you good shipping news. But before he turned to that important listing he ran his eyes along the front page headlines. BORAH AND BUTLER DEBATE PROHIBITION. (Oh, yeah! Why didn't they scrap the whole stinking mess instead of chewing the rag about it?) "Senator Borah said that people should not talk about repeal until they had waited for a quarter of a century at least. . . . (Jesus, what a guy!)

"Butler declared that the prohibition amendment had broken down, that it had brought a wave of corruption and crime in its wake." Jan nodded. Brother, you said a mouthful!

And here! What's this? FUR REDS CHARGE AFL FRAME-UP!

“ . . . throughout the strike the Industrial Squad led by Lieutenant James J. O'Connor slugged more than three hundred pickets, but did not molest thugs hired by the manufacturers. The Industrial Squad was still beating furriers . . . ”

He flipped the pages. The shipping column would inform him about the prospects for work in the early part of next week. And it would tell him at which pier a ship was expected to dock. Not that *he* needed to know, for he was working as a regular at his pier—one of the few lucky guys who did work steady. But he liked to keep track of the goings on along the waterfront, and liked to know when and where the ships docked. It used to be the custom that the Stevedore ran up an American flag on the pole outside the gates when a ship was reported to have passed Fire Island. It would take about four hours before the ship docked, and word had time to go around so that the men would know at what pier to shape. But nowadays the Stevedores didn't give a damn. Now the ship was half-way up the river before that flag went up. Which meant that the guys who didn't work regularly had to hang around the pier gates all the time, in rain and snow and all sorts of weather, or they would be likely to miss the call.

He smoothed the page. Here we are:

Saturday, April 9, 1927. Shipping and Mails.

Incoming Steamships:

*Minnekahda*, Atlantic Transport, from London: will dock at West 16th Street.

*Lancastria*, the Cunard Line, from Southampton; will dock at West 14th Street.

*Arabic*, *Stavangerfjord*, *Olympic*, *Aquitania* . . .

And the big freighter *Manasquan* would dock at *his* pier—where he had worked these many years. The paper didn't say what time the ship was due, but perhaps the *Sunday Times* would give that important information.

Okay. And the weatherman predicted: Cloudy, followed by

rain today and probably tomorrow.—Which is what to expect on your day off!

High tide at 2:09 at Sandy Hook. The Sun sets at 6:29.

He read it all. Also that, “The *Leviathan* of the United States Line sails at noon today for Southampton and Cherbourg with a long list of passengers.” He hoped they’d have a fine trip. Yawning he let the paper slip from his fingers. He could do with an extra hour’s sleep. And with another yawn he stretched out on the bed and closed his eyes.

Toward evening he suddenly heard loud voices out in the hall. Mrs. Blom was speaking angrily: “You’re mistaken if you think I’m going to wait on you hand and foot! I’m sure you’re not that sick.”

“Don’t scream at me!” Karen shouted back.

“You are doing the screaming, not I,” Mrs. Blom replied, her voice trembling with her effort at self-control.

“I know what’s eating you. It’s because Jan gave me money for a coat.”

“That’s a lie!”

The answer was a contemptuous laugh. Then a door banged shut. And Jan heard Mrs. Blom stump upstairs, muttering to herself.

Later that night someone knocked at his door, and Karen stood on the threshold. She looked downcast. “Do I disturb you?” she said. And without waiting for an answer she came and curled up on the sofa. She sat without speaking a word, her little hand plucking nervously at her dress.

“Why so blue?” Jan asked. “What was all the shouting about?”

She sobbed and brushed her fingertips across her eyes. “Jan,” she said humbly, “are you angry with me?”

“Angry! . . . No, why do you ask such a thing?”

“Mrs. Blom hates me.”

"No, no!"

"She's always nagging me. Can't please her." And suddenly she threw herself forward on the sofa, buried her face in the pillow and wept.

"Now, listen here," he soothed her. "There's no reason why you should feel like that." And he remembered what Dr. Thomas had said: *Humor her a little. Try not to cross her.*

"I think you must have gotten her wrong," he said. "She's a good kind."

"She hates me," Karen insisted, raising her head. "She doesn't show it to you. But she nags me every minute of the day. I can't stand it."

"Seems hard to believe," he said. Yet his brow wrinkled.

"She wants to get rid of me," she sobbed. "I don't blame her, though. I'm an expense. But . . . I don't know where to go."

Now Jan stiffened up. "Well, if that's the case, then I'll have a talk with her."

With her blonde head on the pillow she beckoned to him. "Jan . . . come here a minute."

She took his hand. "So long as you don't hate me, I don't care."

"Hate you! Why should I?"

"I'm a lot of trouble."

"Forget it. I'll see that you're taken care of."

He waited for her to calm down. He no longer felt like a stranger in her presence. She needed him, and that helped to give him confidence. He watched her slim figure, her long silk-stockinged legs. He held her little white hand in his own. He would miss her when she left.

She looked up from the pillow. "It did me good to talk to you," she said. "I feel so comfortable with you."

"I'm glad to hear that."

But then he threw a nervous glance at the door. Karen caught it.—"Afraid the old woman will come?"



"Yes. Would be kind of awkward, wouldn't it?"

"I'll tell you—let's lock the door."

"But suppose she comes and bangs at it. Then we're caught."

"No, we are not. I'll show you." She stepped to the second door in the room, the one leading from Jan's quarters to hers. In former days, when this had been a private house, all the rooms on each floor had been connected by doors. Now some of them had been locked for good, and each room was rented out individually.

Jan watched her push a small metal hasp from its hook. The door opened into her room. "That's all there is to it," she smiled. "Now I can just walk in, and no one will know."

He nodded, yet looked a bit dubious.

She came back and sat on the sofa again. From the river rolled a deep-throated bellowing. Jan was looking at the photograph on the bureau, the picture of a little girl on a white horse. But when Karen stroked his hand he turned to her, a warm light in his eyes.

She smiled and patted his hand affectionately. Then, "I'll go," she said. "You need a good night's rest." She kissed him. "Sleep well." Crossing the floor, she slipped into her own quarters. She looked around and smiled at him before pushing the door shut.

He stood there thinking long after she had gone. Turning to the bureau he took Eliska's picture in his hand. Karen's words echoed in his mind: "It is only her memory you love."

Perhaps she was right. He had been away many years. The girl in this picture no longer existed, and if he returned home he would meet a stranger, and he would be a stranger to her.

She had changed, and he had changed. Their hearts and their minds.

How fast the years had passed since he left his native land! Fifteen long years spent working on ships, fighting in France, lying in a hospital, looking for a new job, then again working

here at the docks. And in the meantime everything had changed.

He paced the floor. "She is waiting for you," an inner voice reproached him.

"But we have changed, both of us. We would have nothing in common, nothing but the memory of that which is lost and gone."

He stopped before the window and looked into the starlit spring night. Lights gleamed on the opposite shore. Shadowy craft moved in the stream.

ANOTHER MONDAY MORNING ARRIVED. ALSO A COUPLE OF ships for the Chelsea docks. One for Jan's pier, one for the next pier north. And loud signals from the sea told that more steamers would soon be coming up the stream.

Jan was glad to shape up and go to work. He had been worrying all weekend, and the little girl in the picture had seemed to watch him reproachfully. But when he worked he was too busy to remember his own affairs.

The month of May was here, and a balmy wind blew across the Hudson. The air was hazy with sunlight, steam and river mist. Presently deep roars and excited tootings were heard from downstream. Whistles shrieked, and a lumbering Jersey ferry cleared out of mid-channel in a hurry. Then a towering bulk emerged out of the sun haze, looming large against the smoke-filled sky. It glided nearer, and now a flock of shaggy-nosed tugs were seen swarming around a giant liner which majestically floated to its berth somewhere a few blocks from Fifth Avenue.

Jan went to bed early that night, as was his habit in the early part of the week, when the Chelsea longshoremen are seldom called upon for night work. He didn't know how long he had

slept when he was suddenly awakened by screeching fire engines hurtling along cobbly West Street outside. The window-panes rattled. And now fireboats howled off in the river. A pier shed is on fire, he thought. Or maybe a ship.

More fire engines thundered by the house, with bells jangling and sirens ripping the midnight quiet. Jan listened to the uproar while watching the moonlight flow into the room. A policeman shouted orders out there. The night was filled with violence.

Then he heard a slight sound from across the room. Karen's door opened slowly, and a slender white figure appeared on the threshold. He did not know what to believe. But the figure came forward, and the moonlight fell on a mass of golden hair. He was about to call her name, but checked himself. Perhaps this was one of those spells the doctor spoke of. It might be dangerous to call her.

He lay motionless, watching her approach. She was clad only in a nightgown, and held her hands to her breast. The moonlight sculptured her beautiful face.

She reached his side. And while he looked at her in amazement she sat down on the bed and stretched out her hand for him. "I am afraid," she said, in barely a whisper. "I am afraid . . ."

She bent forward, and he saw that her face was stamped with fear. Her lips were parted, her eyes wide.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he said gently, still hardly daring to speak to her.

"Yes . . . I am afraid. . . . Those terrible screams."

"It is only fire engines."

"Fire! . . . Oh! . . ." She crept closer to him. "Oh, I am afraid of fire!"

"It is far away."

"Far . . . away?"

"Sure. Don't be scared."

Her hand groped for him. She buried her face in the curve

of his neck, trembling with fear, and whimpering as a new outburst of thunder and clamor filled the night.

He covered her with the blanket, and felt her warm body against his own. The fireboats shrieked out in the stream.

She lay huddled close to him, without speaking, while the disturbance lasted out there. She only cried out softly now and then, and clutched at him when a fresh noise shook the night.

The violence died down, and clanging fire engines were heard returning to their stations. Silence ebbed back over the waterfront. All was quiet once more.

He put his arm around her. She was still trembling.

He gently spoke her name, and touched her face and her white arm. But she was listening for sounds from outside. "Oh, I am so afraid of fires!" she wailed. "I started a fire once. I dropped a lamp, and the house burned down."

He bent forward and kissed her. She was passive and did not resist, but when his desire mounted she pulled back from him. "Don't," she whimpered and held up her hand to halt him.

His head fell back on the pillow. He had been too abrupt with her, he reproached himself. He had been too rough and bold.

She was speaking to him, in plaintive tones, almost like a child seeking redress from disappointment. "Jan—I want to ask you something. . . . It is about someone I knew once. I wonder . . . does he still think of me?"

"Well, how can I know?"

"He used to like me a lot."

"Do you think of him now?"

"Oh . . . it's only that I wonder. He used to like me. But, things went wrong."

"Was that Dick?"

"Ye-es . . . yes, it was Dick. How did you know?"

"You spoke his name down at the barge. Yes, I guess he remembers you."

"You do? You really do?"

"Yes. I can't see how any man could ever forget you."

"You really believe he's missing me?" she said, and snuggled up to him.

"Does that make you so happy?" he said bitterly.

"Oh, no. If I could be sure that he thinks of me, then I don't care."

"You're queer. If you don't care for him, why worry about him?"

"Oh! I just want him to think of me."

He drew her close with an abrupt movement and turned her face so that the moonlight fell on it. "You are beautiful!" he said huskily, gathering her in his arms. But she made no response. Only when he became too aggressive did she ward him off lamely.

"I'll go back to my room now," she said.

"No, stay," he begged her. "Stay a while more." He tried to hold her. But she glided from his reach and stepped out on the floor, then went quickly back to her room.

WHEN JAN WOKE NEXT MORNING THE PREVIOUS NIGHT seemed like a dream. But recalling how Karen had talked about Dick his pangs of jealousy were real enough. Did she love Dick? But no. She had said she only wanted him to think of her. Still . . . why should she?

She puzzled him. However, nothing could change the fact that she had come to him during the night. She might come again!

He jumped out of bed, put on his clothes, stuck the steel hook under his belt and went down to the bull line at the pier. And whenever had a morning looked so bright? The May sunshine flooded the blue river from which rose the lusty clang of longshoremen's work. Even the tugboats appeared to chug along with a livelier speed. The winches were spinning with joy, and joyfully swung the cargo booms. Fervor seemed to charge all things.

Tonight! . . . She might come again tonight!

But now his conscience raised its voice. For fifteen years his dream had been to return to Bohemia and to the girl who was waiting for him there. Not with one single stroke could he cut loose from all that.

He groaned under the rebuke of the inner voice. And he

remembered Eliska's cry that night when he said farewell to her: "Perhaps you will meet an American girl and marry her instead."

Yet everything had changed with the passage of the long years.

He hardly gave himself time to eat when evening came, he was so anxious to get home. He washed, shaved carefully, then reached for the paper and sat down to wait, glancing up from time to time on hearing a sound over at the door. He knew that Karen was in her room. He heard her move about. But she did not come.

Oh, well, then. Let her stay in there. A fine spring evening out, and he would take a walk. He might go down to the dock and see if Nils' barge was in. Or he might drop into a speakeasy and get himself a drink.

He threw the paper to the floor and put on his jacket.—But wait! Didn't he hear a rattle of the door knob? No . . . only a slight noise from a truck rumbling by out in the street. Oh, well, there were other skirts around. Now, if he should go to a speakeasy—why, there would be plenty of dames.

His cap? Where the hell was that cap?

Yes, she was in her room, all right. What was she doing, anyway? What could a girl be doing all by herself a whole long evening? . . . Damn it! He kicked the paper across the floor. Should he go, or shouldn't he? Somehow he didn't feel like a speakeasy tonight.

He glanced at the clock. Still early. It must have been much later when she came in last night. . . .

He paced the floor, giving the newspaper a kick each time he passed it. He cocked his ear to the other room. God knows what she was doing in there. Well, guess he wouldn't go out after all. He would go to bed and get some rest.

He flung the cap onto the table and tore off his clothes. Sure, it was still early. He stretched out in bed and lay there listening



to the sounds from Karen's room. He heard her cross the floor. She moved a chair. What in God's name was she doing?

An hour later moonlight poured through the open windows. Moonlight and a gentle wind from the river. The night was very still. There was only a lone call from a ship out at sea.

IN THE MORNING JAN'S GANG LOADED FORD CARS INTO THE ship. The cars were packed in wooden crates, and wire slings had to be adjusted nicely around the crate ends before the signal was given to hoist. Then the heavy cargo was lowered slowly into the hold.

Honest Persson hovered about the gang whenever he had a moment to spare from other duties. "Careful!" he warned the men. "Careful, boys!"

They were careful.

All except Jan. "Get out from under that crate!" Persson yelled, exasperated. "What's ailing you today?"

Jan jumped to one side. He hadn't noticed he was standing under the raised crate.

"Use your head, will you?" Persson bawled. "Want to kill yourself? Well, that's okay. Only go somewhere else an' do it. Why pick on me?"

No, hell, no. Jan hadn't any wish to kill himself. Life had never seemed more interesting. It was only that his thoughts were elsewhere today.

It was only that he was half crazy with jealousy. Was she in love with that Dick? She had said not. But if she didn't

love him, why would she worry about him? She only wanted him to think of her, she said. That sounded looney.

Karen's door was closed when he came up the stairs that night. He heard her moving about in her room. After having washed and shaved and put on his good clothes he sat down to wait as on the evening before. He tried to read the paper, but flung it down. A vision of Karen blotted everything else from his mind—her slim white form as she had come across the floor in the moonlight.

"Goddamn her!" . . . He jumped to his feet. Why didn't she come?

He heard a sound from her room. She walked across the floor. . . . She was coming! . . . But no. She wasn't.

He stepped to the window and looked out—seeing nothing. He flopped down in a chair and waited. Nothing happened. The hours passed. She didn't come.

Then beyond himself he knocked at her door. She did not answer, and he turned the knob. But as he tried to push the door open he found that she had dragged a heavy piece of furniture in front of it!

That nearly drove him mad. He tried the door again. It was firmly blocked by the furniture. "Karen," he called. "I must see you!"

No answer.

"Karen!" he called again.

No reply.

Then his temper flared. He put his shoulder to the door, but was unable to budge it.

Presently there came a brisk knock on the other door, the one that led to the hall. He turned his head. Ah! Here she came at last! . . . As the door opened, however, not Karen but Mrs. Blom was standing over there, staring into the room.

"What's going on here?" she frowned. "What is all this noise in the middle of the night?"

She entered and looked around suspiciously, without finding anything out of the ordinary. Yet, she was not reassured. "What *was* the noise I heard?" she asked again.

"Nothing," he stammered. "I . . . just happened to knock the chair over."

She bored her eyes into him. "Is that why you're dressed up in your Sunday clothes—so you can knock chairs over? Jan, I might as well tell you that I'm fed up with all this."

"With what?" he said, to gain time.

"With that blessed woman in there for one thing!"

"Oh, Karen!"

"Yes, her. I can't stand these goings on in my house. It makes me nervous. I can't sleep nights. I don't know what you two are doing, but whatever it is it must stop."

"I don't know what you mean . . ."

"Jan, don't pretend. Your face gives you away. Let's talk things over frankly. I'm not unreasonable. You know things can't go on like this."

"Well . . ."

"I hate to see you get tangled up with her. I've said that before, and I say it now. What's the use of all these carryings on? After all, you're going back to your folks soon.—Or, are you not?" she added, as his face reddened.

He avoided her eyes.

"Don't be a fool, Jan. As for that woman. I've a plan for her. You know I've a married daughter in Jersey. She and her husband have a little farm there. Well, I've spoken to them, and they said she could come and stay with them for a while—until she gets on her feet."

"On a farm?"

"Yes, a farm. And what's wrong with that, if I may ask? It is spring now. The country is wonderful. It would do her a world of good to spend a few weeks on a farm."

"But . . . I don't think she'd like that. Not on a farm."

"That's just too bad! That's the best I can do for her. I've

made the offer. She can take it or leave it. But I won't have her in my house another day. I'm fed up."

They both turned around at the sound of quick footsteps over at the door. And there was Karen, her head thrown back defiantly. Judging from her expression it was evident she had overheard every word they had said. Her face was white. Her nostrils quivered. Yet she kept herself under control.

She came slowly into the room, an unlit cigarette nonchalantly held aloft in her little hand. She carried herself like a woman of the world, slim and elegant in her tightfitting black dress. And haughty. Completely ignoring poor dumpy Mrs. Blom, she smiled sweetly at Jan. "Can I have a light?" she said, a tremor in her voice.

He struck a match for her, and she puffed at the cigarette and blew out a cloud of smoke.

Mrs. Blom was glowering. "Look here, young lady. We've just been discussing you."

"You have!" she said, arching her eyebrows and exhaling a cloud of cigarette smoke. "How very interesting!"

"Don't blow smoke into my face! Have you no manners?"

Karen studied the glowing cigarette point before she turned to Jan with another smile. "I've been napping all evening. Have you been home? I wanted so much to see you."

"What do you want with Jan?" Mrs. Blom snapped. "Let him alone."

Jan raised his hand to halt their quarrel. But Karen stepped up to him and kissed him full on the lips. "I love Jan," she said, with a triumphant side-glance at Mrs. Blom.

Jan stood transfixed. Mrs. Blom made a move as though she wished to strike this impudent girl. "You!" she cried. "What do you know about love?"

Karen caught her breath. Her lips trembled. "You say that again!" she said, smoldering, "if you dare!"

"I do say it. Leave Jan alone, and stay out of this room."

"Who says so?"

"I do."

"And who do you think you are?"

"A decent woman. What are you?"

Karen's eyes narrowed to flashing gray slits. "How dare you! How dare you!" she cried.

"You heard me. Now get out of my house!"

Digging her nails into the palms of her hands Karen stood straight and tense before the furious Mrs. Blom. Angry, outraged, defiant. But suddenly a spasm shook her slender frame. She uttered a strange cry, tottered, and dropped to the floor, banging her head against the marble slab of the fireplace.

Jan ran forward and bent over her. She was chalk-white. Her eyeballs had rolled upward, and her lips were pressed tightly together.

"Karen! . . ." He called her name. Pale Mrs. Blom stood with her hands tightly clasped.

Karen lay rigid as if dead. But then her face twitched. Spasm after spasm shook her, and her head was jerked violently from side to side. Her hands clenched and unclenched, her arms threshed the air.

"Jesus Christ!" Jan groaned. "What should we do?"

"Let her be for the moment," Mrs. Blom said in a thick voice. "I think it will wear itself out."

She moistened a towel in fresh water. "Here. Wipe her face."

He tried to do as he was told, but Karen's movements were so violent that he could hardly touch her. She was putting up a fearful battle against her invisible enemy. Her convulsed face was dusky. Foam flecked her lips.

"Jesus, what should we do?" Jan repeated, kneeling helpless by her side.

He wiped her lips. There were red blood stains in the foam. But her desperate struggle subsided somewhat. Soon it ceased, and her arms fell limply to the floor.

Bending forward, Jan again moved the towel gently across

her face. Her labored breathing abated. She lay motionless now as if she had suddenly dropped into sleep.

"I better run for the doctor," he said tensely to Mrs. Blom. "God, I hope he's home!"

"First let's put this pillow under her head."

He warily raised Karen's head and placed the pillow under it. Touching her he got blood on his hands. There was blood in her hair. "Joseph, Jesus and Mary!" he cried with horror. "She's split her head open! She struck the fireplace when she fell!"

Mrs. Blom gasped. "Run, get the doctor! Jan, hurry! Call him on the phone!"

A CAR PULLED UP TO THE CURB OUTSIDE. HURRIED FOOT-steps. And Dr. Thomas stepped into the room. "So she did have a seizure," he said regretfully, on seeing Karen's motionless figure on the floor.

"Her head is bloody," Jan said anxiously. "She struck it when she fell."

The doctor kneeled at her side. He felt her pulse, parted her blonde hair and flashed a light. "She had luck," he said. "It's only a slight cut. Might have been worse."

He took some bandages, tape and iodine from his bag and attended to her. "What happened?" he asked, looking up. "What brought it about?"

Mrs. Blom colored. "We had an argument. I'm terribly sorry. She got too upset."

"That explains it. It's a shame. One must be patient with her."

He studied Karen's face intently. "She's in a coma now," he said. "I don't know how long it will last."

Jan stood slowly grinding his hands together.

"We'll lift her over to the bed," the doctor said. "Jan, you help me."

Bending down, Jan put his arms gently under Karen and



raised her with ease, as though she were but a child asleep. He carried her across the floor and put her down on the bed.

The doctor placed Karen's arms comfortably along her sides, then pulled a chair over to the bed. "I'll wait awhile," he said. "She may snap out of it soon."

He glanced at Mrs. Blom. "Why don't you go and lie down? It is late. Jan and I can manage."

She nodded, and left the room.

Jan took another chair. The doctor leaned forward and observed Karen closely. "Poor girl," he said. "Too bad this should happen so soon again."

"Is it very dangerous?" Jan asked, apprehensive.

"Well, no . . . not as dangerous as it looks."

"But . . . can't she be cured of it?"

The doctor shook his head. "Chances are small."

He turned his eyes toward the bed. "When she comes out of it," he said, "don't argue with her. Don't get her excited."

They sat in silence.

"Has she told you about herself?" the doctor then asked. "Know any more about her?"

"She's from Norway. That's all I know."

"I see. Which means there are things she doesn't want us to find out. God knows what her life has been like! But don't ask her. It's better not to rake up old coals."

"Well," Jan said after a pause, "there was that man, Dick. She talks about him. Wonders if he's thinking of her."

"She does!"

Stretching out his hand the doctor touched her pulse. He glanced at his watch. "It's after twelve now. She may sleep all night. But I'll stay awhile longer."

"You're sure there's no cure for her," Jan said.

"Well, what I mean is, no out-and-out cure. But a great deal could be done. Suppose we could prevent her from having

seizures for a long time—say two years. It's possible the habit would be broken."

"But what can you do when the spells hit her like that?"

"Not much. Just see that she doesn't hurt herself. If you really want to do something for a woman like that, there's only one thing.—Patience."

"Patience? . . ."

"Yes. It would help a lot if she could be saved from emotional stress. I'm afraid she's had too much of that."

"Should be taken care of, you mean?"

"Yes. But who will do it? A woman with her handicap."

Jan looked at Karen's pale face. Her lips were slightly parted. She was strikingly beautiful in the lamplight.

"One thing more," the doctor said. "Do you know if she goes in for drinking a lot?"

"Well . . . she said she takes a drink when she feels blue."

"That's bad. People like her should never touch drink. They go to the dogs if they don't leave booze alone. Drink is worse than poison for them."

After a pause Jan said: "You say if one could keep the spells away from her a long time, then . . . she would get cured?"

"She might. One can never tell. Well enough to get along anyway."

Jan nodded. A minute later he glanced at Karen, for she suddenly stirred. She wailed softly, as she had done that time after he took her away from the barge. She rolled her head to one side and opened her eyes.

The doctor bent over her. "You are all right," he said in a kind, soothing voice. "Don't be afraid now."

She gave a low whimper, and moved her hand to her head.

"Don't be alarmed," the doctor said again. "You've just hurt your head a little. Nothing to worry about. You take it easy, and I'll give you something for a good night's sleep."

Jan brought a glass of water, and the doctor emptied a powder into it and stirred the contents. Putting his arm behind

Karen's back he raised her to a sitting position and made her drink.

"So there. . . ." He let her sink back again. "Now rest a few minutes, then we'll get you into your bed, and in the morning you'll feel all right."

AFTER THE DOCTOR LEFT, JAN STEPPED INTO KAREN'S room to make certain everything was well with her. She was asleep. Looking at her he thought of what the doctor had said, that she might be cured if only the spells could be headed off for a time. . . . If he could only help her! This beautiful girl! To restore her. To free her from this curse. The doctor had spoken of patience. Jan vowed he would have infinite patience with her. . . . If she only would let him take care of her.

He closed the door softly and went to his own quarters, walking the floor and thinking.—If she would only let him take care of her! What greater happiness could there be for him?

He paced back and forth. Outside the windows the spring night wove its silence around docks and piers and the black hulls of ships. There was something watchful and apprehensive about this night, as if the very silence waited for an answer.

And was not the issue momentous? He had reached a cross-roads. Which turn should he take? One led back to his native land. The other . . . it was for Karen to decide. That path

would take him into a life more wonderful than he had ever dreamed of.

It was for her to decide. He walked up and down the floor, thinking. And he recalled with a flash of joy how she had stepped to his side and kissed him. . . . "I love Jan."

Could it be? Did she really care for him? She was so superior to him. So beautiful. So worldly and smart.

But he loved her. Now since he had met her—what would his life be without her?

Karen would have to decide. It was her choice.

He spoke to her about it the following night. As he came into her room she was lying on the couch, nervously smoking a cigarette, a pillow propped under her head.

He, too, was nervous, for he feared she would scorn him. But some kind of arrangement must be made, one way or the other. "Mrs. Blom doesn't want us to stay here any longer," he began. "So I wonder . . . what plans have you? I want to do anything I can for you, of course."

She was silent at first, watching the glowing tip of the cigarette from which the smoke curled. She had so much the look of a cornered animal that Jan felt oppressed.—Did she care for him at all?

She still remained silent. He could tell by her expression that looking into her heart she could find no road she wished to take.

"I'll do whatever I can for you," he said heavily. "You know that. It's only that we got to decide now."

She ground the cigarette stub among the ashes in a tray. She ground it fiercely until every last spark was extinguished. "Well," she said, her voice harsh, "the sooner I get out of here the better. What do you suggest?"

"It's for you to say. For my part—I . . . care a lot for you. As I just said, I'll do anything I can to help you."

She reached for another cigarette and struck a match. A

cloud of smoke enveloped her. She was thinking. She was racking her brain, and weighing the issue in her mind.

"If you want," he said slowly, "we could find you another room somewhere. I could . . . help you out. But it wouldn't be much of a place, I'm afraid. Not if I got to keep a place for myself too."

She was thinking. Smoking and thinking.

Jan, too, was thinking. If she chose this—who then would look after her?

"Of course," he said, "I don't know if you . . . care for me at all. But if you feel you'd team up with me . . . well, that would make things easier all around."

When she did not answer, he quickly added: "But of course, I don't want you to unless you . . . unless you care. If you don't, well, there's that other way out."

Her voice came as if from behind a smoke screen, level and cool. "Yes, Jan . . . I love you. But I'm feeling pretty low and jittery just now. Couldn't we get ourselves a place first, and then—I mean—couldn't we just wait awhile?"

"Sure, of course!" His face lighted up. "Sure, you take it easy. In the meantime we can start looking around."

A smile crossed her lips. "You're a dear . . ." Her cool fingers touched his hand.

He still didn't seem to believe that all this was true. "You really mean it?" he said. "Karen, if you don't care for me I wouldn't want you to do it. I could always help you."

"Yes, I love you," she said evenly, as if she had made her decision for good.

He got to his feet and started to walk excitedly up and down the floor.

"But don't let's get a place here on the waterfront," Karen said. "I hate the docks. They get on my nerves."

He looked disappointed. "Well, if that's the case . . . But we can't move too far away."

"What about the Village? That's not far."

"The Village! Why do you want to live there?"

"Jan, please. It would be such fun."

"Okay, then. If that's the way you feel about it."

"Swell."

"We'll see what we can find." Overjoyed, he took her in his arms and kissed her. "Jesus, I can hardly believe it's true!"

She raised her hand to ward him off, but he hungrily kissed her lips and her soft white throat.

She pushed him away and sank back on the pillow. "You're too rough," she gasped. "You smother me. Jan, please, I'm so tired tonight."

"Okay. . . . Guess you need a rest. God, I feel so happy I won't be able to sleep! Well, I'll see you tomorrow, and we'll start looking for a place."

"Ye-es . . . Goodnight," she said sweetly as he nodded to her from the door.

HE WAS DAZED WITH HAPPINESS WHILE WORKING ABOARD ship the next day. What a turn his life had taken! To think that Karen and he would make a home together! And to think that she cared for him! Even if ever so little! Such a beautiful girl! And an American girl at that! For he never could think of her as Norwegian-born. She was American in every way, in speech and smart appearance. Nothing foreign about her. With Karen he would feel as though he belonged in this country.

Yet there was no smooth sailing for him. Before he could take up life with Karen he must write home and tell his people not to expect him. For so his conscience bade him.

It would be a difficult letter to write. One thing to decide that Karen meant all this to him—something else again to cut himself off forever from all that bound him to his old home.

In the evening he sat staring at a blank sheet of paper. He wrote to Eliska first, but could not make himself tell her about Karen. That would hurt her too much. So he merely wrote that she no longer should wait for him, for he knew he would never return home.

Having finished the letter, he sealed it and went out to mail



it at once. It was done. The thunder of West Street was in his ears. Then he thought of Karen, and turning from the letter box he hurried back to the house.

"I've just written home," he said, on entering her room.

"Written home? . . ." Her face was a blank.

"To my folks. Told them not to wait for me."

"Oh! . . ."

He was not aware of the change of expression on her face. She said nothing. Just reached for a cigarette.

However, if Karen was listless at first she soon changed and became enthusiastic and gay.

They went to look for an apartment. And it was their luck, perhaps, that this was Greenwich Village, for few other localities would have admitted them. Anywhere else they might have been thought too odd to be trusted—Karen arresting and elegant, striking attitudes and flipping ashes off her cigarette; Jan grave and a bit lumbering, and agreeing with most of what Karen said.

But the Village is used to queer people, and after some looking around they found a likely apartment on the edge of the community. Next came the buying of furniture and household goods. As Jan was at the docks all day, Karen attended to these details. She entered into it with high spirits. Jan gave her the money, and she went from store to store and ordered furniture, rugs, dishes and knick-knacks. She had a grand time. She wanted everything of the best. She was setting up a home, she told people. Jan had a fresh surprise every night he returned from work. His savings were going fast.—So, what the hell!

"I'm not finished yet," Karen would say triumphantly. She had picked up numbers of ideas for furnishing a home while they went around looking for an apartment. She had seen artfully wrought lamp shades which threw a subdued light over the room; she had seen modernistic trappings; her alert mind

had memorized remarkable furniture arrangements. She was now creating a combination of all these impressions—and going them one better for good measure. Jan secretly shook his head, and thought with regret of his simple room at Mrs. Blom's.

But Karen was satisfied, and nothing could please him more. She had undergone a surprising change in a short time. Her weariness had disappeared. Her blue eyes flashed.

He was happy as he watched her. How beautiful she looked!

JAN WAS VERY HAPPY THE FOLLOWING WEEKS. HE WALKED on air.

He adored Karen. She was beautiful by Nature's gift, and now he invested her with all other admirable qualities he wished to find in his beloved. Sometimes it seemed as if Karen were warmed by his devotion. There were moments when a glow lit her otherwise cold blue eyes, and her voice became soft. Watching his efforts to please her, she would smile. "Jan, you're a great fellow." And then he beamed and took her in his arms and kissed her.

Yet even as he drew her close to him he felt her grow tense and unyielding. "No more. Not now," she begged him. "Please . . ."

She slipped from his embrace. He did not understand her. He told himself he knew nothing about women. Perhaps he was too rough with her. He must be patient and give her a chance to get used to him.

Now that they were in the Village he was drawn into a way of life which he hated. Karen wanted him to go with her to the cafés, for she said she needed diversion after being home alone all day. He followed her reluctantly, ill at ease among

the people they met. And Karen's flamboyant manner often embarrassed him.

And he knew he would never get to like the Village street where they lived. Stripped of its quaint name it was only a narrow slum street, and through the window he saw nothing but a row of dingy houses and rusty fire-escapes opposite. He missed the river. At Mrs. Blom's he had liked to look out and see the water glitter with early sunlight. Or rain might lash the river, or it might be packed with ice while a winter storm howled across the docks.

Whatever its aspect, the river gave him a feeling of confidence. On the waterfront he knew how to handle himself. There he made his living, and there he was well able to hold his own.

He said nothing about this to Karen, for he knew all too well that she hated the waterfront. Unbearable to her were the shrieks of ships' whistles and the roar of wagons and trucks. To her a ship coming up the river was merely a smoke-belching hulk. To him it was a freighter which brought cargo and work.

She was happy, however. And to Jan that meant everything. Frequently during the day's work he would pause to think of her, and then he counted the hours until evening came and he could hurry home.

But at the end of the week, when he worked overtime, he would neither see her nor have a chance to talk to her for several days, as they had separate rooms so that he would not disturb her sleep when he came home late. Passing her closed door in the middle of the night he would stop to listen for a sound from within, excited at the thought of her sleeping in there. And during the weekend, when he was home, he would catch tantalizing glimpses of her through the half-open door while she was dressing—a slim leg stretched out as she pulled on her silk stocking; or her snowy-white bosom as she came from her bath with a dressing gown thrown about her.

One such morning he followed her. She had not expected him, and was letting her wrapper fall from her shoulders when he stepped into the room.

For a moment he remained motionless, looking at her. Then he crossed the floor and took her in his arms. She struggled with him and managed to free one arm. She tried to ward him off, but he grasped her wrist and held her with an iron grip.

"Jan, please, let me be," she whimpered, again trying to fight him off.

He saw that this was no coquetry. She earnestly tried to get free of him. She wanted none of him. His arms fell to his sides, and he stared at her, his face flushed, his black hair tumbling over his brow.

"I think you must hate me," he said, breathing heavily.

Avoiding his eyes she pulled her gown together.

"Answer me."

"Jan, please . . ."

"I don't understand you," he said, passing his hand across his flustered face. "You told me that . . . that you cared . . ."

She slowly drew back from him, guilt in her eyes.

"Didn't you say that?"

She retreated to the wall, a seductive creature trapped at last. Yet she would try once more. "Let me be," she pleaded, making her voice sweet. "Jan, please, be good to me."

"You are going to answer," he said. "Don't you care for me at all?"

She squirmed. "Ye-es . . . I do love you, Jan . . . as a friend."

"A friend?"

"Jan, please . . . be good!"

He stared at her cowering figure. She had never looked more alluring. "A friend," he repeated, as if the words made no sense to him. "Jesus Christ, what do you mean?"

"Yes—a friend," she said, her voice pitiful and small.

The veins swelled at his temples. "Is that all I am to you!"

"Jan, please!"

But now his face grew hard.

Still with her hands to her bosom she crept into the far corner of the room. He followed her, his eyes bloodshot. Then, raising his fist in sudden uncontrollable fury he brought it down with a crash on her dressing table, splintering the mirror and breaking the table top.

She screamed. "Jan! . . ."

He hunched his shoulders. "You damned liar!" he roared. "Now I know why Dick kicked you out of his house."

"Please! Please!"

"I'm sick and tired of this, do you hear! Tired of your tricks!"

"Jan, I beg you!"

Wild with frustration he raised his hand to strike once more. But . . . he arrested his fist in mid-air. Karen's face had grown chalk-white. A spasm shook her, as it did that time when she suffered a fit during her argument with Mrs. Blom.

His hand dropped.

Karen sank down on her knees, leaning against the wall. Her body rocked with sobs.

"Karen!" He ran to her side, lifted her up in his arms and carried her to the bed. "Karen . . . speak to me!"

She buried her face in the pillow and wept hysterically.

He sat by her side until she was out of danger, then went back to his own room and sat slumped in a chair. Shrill voices of children came from the morning-bright Village street. An Italian vegetable peddler called out his wares.

He got up and paced the floor. He heard a sob from Karen's room, and was tormented with self-reproach. How had they come to this? He recalled how she had looked that time when

he found her at the barge: dazed and frightened. Fearing he would hurt her.

And now he had raised his hand against her—against her whom he loved!

She was weeping. He stopped in the middle of the floor, listening to her sobs. Again fury flared within him. His one strong and clear wish was to go in and take her in his arms and possess her. But that path was blocked. She had repulsed him. She loved him as a friend!

*A friend!* . . . He struck his bloodied fist against the edge of the window jamb. He paced the floor. Then with a fresh onrush of remorse he walked into her room, kneeled beside her bed and took one of her soft hands, disregarding that he covered it with blood stains.

"Forgive me," he begged her.

She drew back from him. "I am afraid," she wailed. "I am afraid of you."

He winced as if struck by a whip.

"I'm afraid you'll hit me." And she half raised her hand to shield her face.

"I shall not touch you," he said dully. "I swear before God Almighty I shall never touch you. Forgive me, Karen. I swear I shall never lose my temper again."

"I am afraid . . ."

He stood with clenched fists, his jaws tight. He remained thus, motionless, until Karen raised her head and threw an anxious glance at him.

When he turned to her he had himself under control. "Karen," he said, evenly as if he weighed each word, "if you don't care for me . . . of course, you're free."

She looked at him, not certain of what he meant.

"But . . . I still want to help you. Maybe you want me to leave you? And I'll do that."

"No! No! Don't go!"

"But what is the use of all this?"

A pause followed. Her bosom heaved. "Jan," she said at last, her voice almost a whisper.

"Yes?"

"I . . . I feel . . . that I am coming closer to you."

"Closer? . . ." He stared at her.

"Yes, Jan."

"You are speaking the truth?" he said huskily.

"Ye-es."

"You really mean . . . you think you'll come to . . . to care for me?"

"Yes, I am coming closer to you. I feel that all the time."

Then he ran forward and took her in his arms without speaking a word.



THE STORM HAVING SUBSIDED, JAN WENT BACK TO HIS room. A backwash of remorse followed his angry outburst. What could he do to make Karen feel happy again? How undo the harm he had wrought?

He walked down to the docks to get his pay envelope. And now he had an idea he thought would appeal to her. "Let's go to a Village joint tonight," he suggested on his return home. "Let's have a real blowout. What do you say?"

Her face brightened, for she could never turn down an offer of that kind. And it seemed strange to him that in spite of their violent quarrel she did not appear worked up. A tempest stirred her but lightly. It made no deep impress on her.

Still, he was glad she didn't sulk. Later in the day she said she would like to go to a place called "The Crow's Nest." She had been there once before with him. It was such great fun.

"Okay with me," he replied. "I think they're a bunch of lunatics. But anything you say."

The Crow's Nest! he thought, as he lathered his face before the mirror. Now why did she pick that wacky joint? The funny part of it was that a Bohemian owned the place, a chunky old-timer named Stepan. A nice fellow. Stepan had spotted Jan

for a Bohunk the first time he and Karen came there. They had shaken hands and Stepan launched into a long talk about the old country. He hadn't been home for thirty years, he said. He enjoyed talking to a countryman.

And sitting down at their table Stepan had taken Jan into his confidence. He indicated the fantastic interior with a contemptuous sweep of his hand. "Crap!" he snorted. "But this is what they go in for. So they get it. And do I make 'em pay!"

Moving the safety razor across his stubbly cheek Jan plowed a ruddy path through the lather. So they were going to "The Crow's Nest." That first time he went there with Karen a woman came and sat at their table. She was of Karen's age, sleek, dark, sophisticated and tipsy. Just how tipsy was difficult to tell, for she confessed at once that she was very distracted that day. "Simply had to tear myself away from the whole damn thing," she said ruefully. "Simply had to get myself a drink so I could relax."

Karen glared at her. The woman seemed oblivious to her presence, however, and leaned confidentially toward Jan while telling her story. She was a chemist, and the head of a large laboratory. But her associates were unreliable. She could trust no one. No one, she said, with a tragic glance at Jan.

Karen kicked his foot under the table, and he uncomfortably cleared his throat, but the sleek chemist was in no mood for subtle hints. She needed sympathy, she claimed. Things were shot to hell at the laboratory. Much damage had been done. And here was she, carrying the whole responsibility on her poor shoulders.

Jan did feel sorry for her. After all, she was just a little bit of a girl, and she had a lot to put up with. But he was afraid of showing what he felt. Karen looked venomous.

The chemist gazed darkly before her—gazed right through Karen, so it seemed, and out on the other side of her. Then with a sigh she got to her feet. But before leaving the table

she patted Jan's cheek, much to his own astonishment and Karen's blistering indignation. "Handsome boy," she murmured with a sad smile. She touched his broad shoulder. "And strong! Oh, I love a strong man!" And with another sigh she took herself off.

Jan stared after her, perplexed. Karen was furious. What the devil was this? The nerve of that bitch! She threw a suspicious glance around the dimly lighted room as if fearing more such vermin would crawl out of the dark corners and try to get at Jan. She eyed him with fresh interest. What was so handsome about him? Well . . . he was not hard to look at. In fact, she was quite proud of him. A man, anyway. No punk. And he'd a hair cut.

Jan had not mentioned the incident since, for he knew Karen hated the sleek chemist. And so it surprised him that she wanted to go back to that loony place.

Jazz music blared in the basement cafés as they left the house that night. But they were not headed for a basement. "The Crow's Nest" was under the eaves.

They soon reached the old building—a former stable—entered a murky doorway, and started a perilous climb up a steep ladder which led to the Nest. Jan felt foolish. They reached a dusty landing lighted only by a candle. And advancing a step they were announced by three hoarse crowings of the black bird after which the place was named. "Kroax! Kroax! Kroax!"

Jan cursed. The first time here he had jumped a foot high as the bird croaked at him in the dark, but now he knew how it worked: You stepped on a loose plank, and the sound came out of a stuffed bird perched above the door.

Pulsating, thick, and throaty groans of saxophones were heard from within. Jan pushed the creaking plank door open and entered, preceded by Karen who was highly excited by this time. And here the Nest. An attic with roughly hewn tables in dark nooks. Flickering lights. A sweating mob danc-

ing on the crowded floor. And a lot of stuffed crows perching around, on rafters and dusty crossbeams aloft. Black-gowned figures flitting about like demons in the gloom were nothing more sinister than waitresses rigged out to resemble crows.

Jan felt silly and uncomfortable. Why had Karen picked this screwy place? He could have understood it if kids had thought it fun. But grown people! Guys with bald spots, and fat mamas with double chins. It seemed indecent. He longed for one of the waterside speakeasies where a man could lean against a bar and have a drink with a pal.

They sat down at one of the plank tables in a corner. Everything was rough plank here. "Careful so you don't get splinters in you," he warned Karen, but she paid no attention to his sarcasm. The band struck up the latest ragtime, and she jumped to her feet. "Come! . . ." She wanted to dance. And rising reluctantly he shuffled across the floor with her. He did it badly, but so did everyone else, jammed into the narrow space between the tables. They just jogged and shook themselves in tempo to the syncopated rhythms throbbing through the Nest. He was relieved when allowed to sit down again.

Stepan caught sight of them and came over. He bowed to Karen. Then, "What you doing here?" he asked Jan.

"That's what I'd like to know myself."

Stepan laughed. He winked a wicked eye, and Jan followed his ironic glance that swept around the Nest. At one table sat a group of money-stuffed people from uptown, agog at this adventure in the Village. They tooted toy trumpets and were decked out in colored paper hats, and Jan wondered again why grown people wanted to make such fools of themselves. Plump mama wore a skirt as skimpy as that of her pert flapper daughter whose amazing spindle-shanks sprawled all over the place.

There now! The music started once more, with a blare and a bang. Daughter popped from the plank seat. Her beau grabbed her, and they began to cut up. College kids, probably.

The girl with a dab of rouge on each cheek, and flat as a plank both in front and behind, awkward and stubby-toed.

"Whoopee!" she shrilled. And "Whoopee!" yelled her beau, a squirt in bell-bottomed trousers and with oiled hair, slack-lipped and loud. "Whoopee! . . ." Jan wished he could have the whelp for one single hour down at the dock, and he would teach this American boy something of which every man ought to have a little first-hand knowledge to set him straight: Hard work. Not boosting something or promoting it. But *making* it by the sweat of your brow—moving it, lifting it, hauling and shipping it.

"Whoopee! . . ." They were off, cheek against cheek, the girl wriggling her ineffectual behind in tempo to the bleatings of the saxophones: *Yoo Hoo! Blah! Doodle Doo Doo!*

Old Stepan grinned. But it was a sardonic grin, and Jan thought maybe Stepan remembered his own youth. He had started to earn his living at the age of ten, and had been at it ever since. He had been a farmhand out West since coming to America, a railroad laborer, a dockhand, and a dishwasher in New York restaurants.

Stepan winked again, and Jan followed his gaze as it traveled from table to table. In one conspicuous nook sat a gentleman with a gray lion mane and flowing tie. He had brought his manuscript along, no doubt because these surroundings provided ideal conditions for work requiring concentration and thought. He slowly turned the pages and rubbed his forehead, only raising his eyes to throw a glance of infinite scorn at the paper-hatted and vulgarly jolly people from uptown who now burst into a raucous "*Yes! We Have No Bananas!*"

"Whoopee! . . ." The saxophones bleated and blared and cooed. A banjo twanged and a drummer pounded ecstatically on his tom-tom. The dancing mob sweated and jogged on the crowded floor. *Yoo Hoo! Doodle Doo Doo! Whoopee!*

Stepan prodded Jan. This time it was a crowd of intellectuals a few tables away. One little tumble-haired fellow was

haranguing the rest, his fragile hand raised in a revolutionary's gesture. His eyes burned. "You got to make the workers class-conscious!" he shouted, and the majority faction cheered. "The history of society is the history of class struggle. The individual is nothing."

Jan glanced up at a nudge of Stepan's elbow, and met his countryman's amused and ironical glance. Now the other disputant raised his voice. He was a scholarly looking man.

"I'm interested in a powerful labor movement," he began. "I'm interested in an educational campaign for the masses and . . ."

A storm of hisses cut him short. The little fiery-eyed fellow leaped forward, his fist raised in the Communist salute. "Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat!" he shouted. "Long live . . ."

The saxophones drowned out the rest. The beats of the tom-tom pulsated through the dim Nest. Excitement ran high and even managed to soften the revolutionary severity of a couple of Union Square comrades, a white girl and her colored companion, demonstratively scorning basic bourgeois prejudices, the girl even disdaining lipstick, although her pale face was rather too pretty to allow her a successful proletarian pose; and her friend seeming a bit insecure in the glory to which his Stalinist loyalty had elevated him. But both he and the girl were rapidly getting drunk on capitalistic hootch.

Bending down, Stepan whispered to Jan: "Order anything tonight. It's on the house."

"Hell, no!"

"Do what I say. It's on the house. I'm making more money than I can use these days."

Karen was having a grand time. And Jan thought she looked gorgeous. She didn't seem to have a care in the world. Her eyes were bright. Her gold bangles gleamed in the candlelight.

He felt a rush of tenderness for her, yet wished she didn't

like this sort of thing so much. He wished they could have a nice quiet home far away from all this, a place near the river, where he belonged.

Then a sleek woman in black flopped down on the bench beside him. The chemist! He looked at her surprised. Karen's blue eyes blazed.

And the chemist was still tipsy. Or, she was tipsy *again*. Anyhow, she was still sad. She stared ruefully into space—stared right through Karen and at something far beyond her. She stared until Karen almost began to believe she *was* transparent.

The chemist sighed and began to tell her story. She was a poet. Only no one understood her. She was a futurist, trying to break a new trail. But small and envious critics attacked her from left and right. "Envy! . . . Oh, Evil, thy name is envy!" she cried. So she came here for a drink, and tried to relax and gain strength for the battle ahead of her.

Jan listened with bewilderment. Karen was speechless.

The ex-chemist sighed. She took Jan's longshoreman's paw and studied it with a rapturous smile. "Oh, beauty! Oh, strength that is man! What is more perfect in God's world than the strong hand of a man! The symbol of work, of creation!"

And before Jan knew what the gal was up to she bent forward and pressed her lips reverently against his mitt. Then, with exalted eyes, she wandered off among the shadows, toward the flickering candles near the plank door. "Kroax!" the stuffed crow cried hoarsely, "Kroax! Kroax!"

Karen stared after her, and it took some time before she could collect herself. She banged her fist against the splintery table top. "I want to go!" she cried. "Jan, let's get out of here!"

But there was Stepan hovering at her side, a smile on his broad Bohemian face. He put a soothing hand on her arm. "That woman," he said, jerking his thumb toward the door. "She's nuts. Don't pay attention. They're all crazy here."

Karen nodded. She turned triumphantly to Jan.

"At least lots of 'em are," Stepan continued. "You know, just bums. They come here and brag an' tell me how big they are. How famous. How talented. Sure, I says. Sure. Got to humor them, you know. Got to keep my trade. But in my heart I despise 'em."

Comforted now, Karen powdered her nose. "You see," she said to Jan. "She's nothing but a plain, good-for-nothing bum!"



MONDAY MORNING AGAIN, WITH THE SHAPE MASSED around the gates. The Stevedore blew his shrill whistle and threw an appraising eye at the bull line. Few ships had come up the river, and there were plenty of men to be had today. This was July, the slackest month of the year. There were almost four hundred men in the Shape, and only a hundred of them belonged to the regular gangs. The rest were extras who worked a few days a week at the most, a horde of *shenangoes*, city unemployed and derelicts.

The hiring Stevedore could pick and choose. "You!" he cried, selecting his extras one by one after he had called the old stand-bys. "You! an' you!"

Only about one third of the men were hired. The remaining two hundred unfortunates scattered slowly, some of them with despair in their eyes, others apathetic. A few of them ran to another pier gate further off along the Chelsea docks where a Stevedore was still calling men. Perhaps they would have better luck there.

The ship had brought a great cargo of tea, and the shed was filled with its fragrance. And there were tin, wool, hides. Number three hold was packed to the hatch coamings with

rubber bales. The first two days of the week were used for discharging the freight. On Wednesday the loading began, and the big holds were rapidly filling up with machinery, steel products, cotton goods, rubber goods, lard and meat. More Ford cars were being shipped to Europe, and Jan's gang spent the early morning hours hoisting big crates aboard ship. That job done he and three other men were ordered down on a barge to unload copper bars from the Michigan mines. "Be careful, boys," Honest Persson shouted as he came rocking on his feet up on ship's deck, grasping the rail with his mutilated hand. "Careful now. Remember poor Mike."

They nodded. No reason why they should forget.

It was in the middle of July, and after the morning mist had lifted from the river the hours crawled through sweltering temperatures. Tugboats, car floats and barges crossed and recrossed the river like craft plowing through solidified heat. The air dripped with moisture. The men grappling with the copper were covered with sweat.

"Okay!" Jan signaled to the hatchman up on ship's deck, straightened his back and stepped aside while the copper bar went aloft. He wiped his face. There were still five hours to go before he could knock off for the day. But what about it? He felt good. Karen had been very sweet the last few days. She had even kissed him before he left for work that morning. Things might yet turn out well.

In the evening after the whistles had blown Tony suggested they drop into Al's speakeasy for a drink before going home. "How about it?" he said. "My gullet's dry."

"Okay. I could stand a drink myself."

So they crossed the West Street tracks and walked over to Al's waterfront saloon, reached by passing a couple of ship chandleries, crossing a junk yard, and then rapping the proper signal on a dilapidated back door. The room was dimly lighted as they entered. A rank smell of whisky filled the air, and

tobacco smoke surged about the half dozen seamen leaning against the bar. Other customers were seated around tables at the other end of the room, hardly visible in the poor light and the smoke. The place was airless and stifling, for the one and only window had been covered with canvas to insure desired privacy. On the outside, facing West Street and the docks, the window was splashed over with whitewash to give the premises an uninhabited look. A few boards were nailed across the jambs.

"Hey, Al," Tony greeted the cadaverous bartender. "How's the boy?"

"Nearer, my God, to Thee," drawled Al, looking like a hollow-eyed ghost in the tobacco smoke. "What's yours?"

Tony ordered drinks, and Al shoved the glasses across the counter. Tony knocked his cap over on his ear. "Jan, here's mud in your eye." He downed the drink in one gulp and smacked his lips. "Hit the spot, eh! Al, let's have another."

"This is on me," said Jan.

He turned his head as the door was pushed open. In came a man, a broad-shouldered, beefy-cheeked brute, expensively dressed. His small quick eyes took in the room, then darted into the far corners of the saloon.

Tony gave Jan a nudge and twirled his glass to achieve a casual air. "Don't stare," he whispered. "Ain't good for your health."

Jan raised his glass and drank. Tony wiped his mouth. "As I was just saying," he spoke loudly. "We'll get that ship trimmed well ahead of time."

"Sure, sure," Jan agreed.

The beefy-cheeked brute joined a small group at a table in the far end of the room. They were smoking away while they talked, their voices barely raised to a hum. Jan could see their cloudy reflections in the mirror behind the bar. Looked like tough customers, all right.

He caught Tony's eye. Tony meaningfully tapped his glass.

And Jan understood.—Booze. Bootleggers. Racketeers. . . . Yes, the big brute looked the part.

“See his white mug?” Tony said under his breath.

Jan nodded, watching Tony pick a couple of matches from an ash tray and put them cross-ways on top of each other. He got it. *Grated window*. Prison. Just out of jail. Yet already back on his old job. Those guys were probably right now plotting a fast one. The waterfront crawled with bootleggers. Rum-running was a big industry, with boatloads of liquor landed right at the piers, in broad daylight sometimes, under the very nose of the cops.

Tony shoved his elbow into Jan’s side. “Let’s scram. My old woman expects me for supper.”

“Okay.”

They were both feeling pretty good when they came out in the street. And when they reached Mrs. Blom’s house Jan said he would pick up a suitcase he had left there when he moved. “You stay here in the hall,” he instructed his friend. “You know she don’t love you. I’ll be down in a jiffy.”

He ran up the stairs. And Mrs. Blom was glad to see him. “How are you making out?” she asked. “You look well.”

“Feeling fine,” he said, then told her why he had come. Mrs. Blom said the door to his old room was open down there; he could pick up his suitcase on his way out. So they talked a few minutes. Mrs. Blom wished him well and asked him not to forget to drop in and see her once in a while.

Having promised he would be around soon he said good-night and went downstairs and fetched his bag. He felt rather queer, standing in that old room of his where he had spent so many years while working on the ships. And as if to further remind him of past days—there that crack-brained Tony was up to one of his old tricks. Cocking his head toward Mrs. Blom’s quarters, and with his hand to one side of his mouth, he blared happily:

*Mademoiselle from Armentières,  
You haven't been kissed in forty years. . . .*

"Quiet!" the well-known and aggravated voice cried from the top floor.

A blissful grin spread across Tony's liquor-flushed features. He edged to the street door, and with one hand on the knob and ready for flight, he delivered his gleeful falsetto finale:

*Hinky dinky parlez-vous!*

KAREN WAS IN A SWEET AND CONSIDERATE MOOD WHEN Jan came home. He had never seen her quite like that. She tried her best to please him. "Been working hard today?" she asked. "It's been so terribly hot."

"Well. You know."

"I mean," she added, her little child's hand smoothing the apron, ". . . you must be tired."

"It's been a hot day, all right," he said, wondering at this new development. She really seemed concerned about him—or at least tried to be.

She started toward the kitchen, then turned around. "I've made some iced tea for you," she said. "Would you like some?"

"Iced tea! Swell, Karen. Yes, I'm thirsty." He didn't know what to make of it all. When she was her usual theatrical self he knew how to cope with her. But this? . . . Could she be after something, perhaps? Could there be something she wanted from him?

But as the evening wore on he saw that he had been unjust. She didn't want anything, only tried earnestly to be good. It moved him. He felt an impulse to take her in his arms, but embarrassment constrained him. The hard and cutting words

had leaped to their lips quickly enough during their quarrel the other morning. But now affection was not so easily expressed.

She was putting up a fight against the erratic and trivial in her character. He sensed it all evening. And it gave him hope for them both. This, that she tried—didn't that show a change in her? Again she woke in him a deep tenderness. She seemed like a child, sobered by admonition and now trying her best to do right.

The night was sultry, and after supper Karen said: "Jan, would you like to go down to the docks? You know, where we went that time."

He looked up in happy surprise, for he had just been wishing he could stroll down to the waterfront as of old and sit there and cool off and watch the river.

"Because . . . it's so hot," she said, as if she felt her suggestion needed to be explained.

So they went down to the river and sat on the wooden pier back of West Washington Market. Jan opened his shirt at the neck. A tug, coming in from the fairway, pulled a barge alongside the pier, and a small dog with a white-plumed tail was skipping back and forth on the barge deck, yapping at the crew. "Nils' barge coming in," Jan said and watched his bargeman-friend catch a hawser thrown to him.

Now Karen noticed a man strolling out on the pier. He seemed like an educated man, a skinny little fellow with a thin neck sticking out of his collar, baggy trousers, and tweed jacket on his arm.

"He's staring at you," she said. "I think he wants to speak to you. Do you know him?"

Just then the fellow turned and walked back. Jan caught his eye, and they exchanged a brief nod. "Well, I've talked to him a couple of times," he said. "Freddie Reed. He's trying to get us a union down here."

"I thought you had one."

"Yes . . . but Freddie doesn't think it's any good. He wants to start a rank-and-file union where the men will have more say. He's against the big shots running the whole show."

"So, what do you think of it?"

"I don't know. I pay my dues and let it go at that. You start making trouble with the union heads and pretty soon something happens to you. Got to keep my job."

Karen turned to the river at a loud blast. A tug passing upstream caused a disturbance in the water below the pier. Tiny waves lapped at the piles. The tidal current surged.

The sky had grown overcast while they were sitting there, but now a rift appeared among the clouds, and the setting sun broke through with flaming yellow and crimson, spilling its fire in the stream.

"Oh, how pretty!" Karen exclaimed. And more fire was poured into the river until a glittering band stretched from one shore to the other. A small craft passing into that field was suddenly engulfed with shimmering sunlight and transformed into an object of splendor, the churning water in its wake flashing as though the craft were propelling itself through a sea of liquid gold. And then as suddenly the boat pushed on into the unlit area. Now left on its own it was again transformed to its ordinary self, and unbeautiful and commonplace it chugged away to some obscure goal.

Jan looked at Karen, sitting in the full glow of the sun. Her hair was flaming gold, her neck and bosom at other times frosty white were for a moment endowed with a crimson flush which made her seem like a young woman in whom the blood flows warm, one full of earthy feeling and affection.

"You look good!" he said. "Wish you could see yourself."

She smiled. And it was not her ordinary flippant smile, the kind she was able to switch on and off at will. A pensive expression came to her face. "Glad if you think so," she said. "I might have been dead if not for you."



"Oh, go on," he protested.

The sun went down behind Castle Point. The river was quickly growing dark.

Karen spoke. She sounded unhappy and depressed. "Jan—I'm not much good for you, am I?"

"What do you mean? Don't talk like that."

She sighed and sat gazing silently across the river. The tide was coming in, a salt current drawn from the ocean by the tide-producing moon. Soon the high-water mark would be reached. There would follow an interval of slack, then the restless current would return, running slowly at first, but gathering speed and flowing with haste into the Bay and out through the Narrows. The water rushing and murmuring. Eternally pulsating with the heartbeats of the sea.

Karen was staring moodily into the stream.

"Come on," Jan said. "We'll make out, you'll see."

And so he believed in his heart. They would make out. After that morning, when Karen said she was coming closer to him, he did not doubt but that everything would turn out well in the end. People grew used to each other in time, didn't they? Again the word *patience* came to his mind. He must be patient. Karen was a strange creature, and he must handle her with care.

Dusk fell, a gentle twilight which wrapped in a soft blue veil all things in the sky, on the river and on shore. Now after the sweltering day, from the stream rose a light mist. And in this evening-blue haze the river and its gliding craft, black docks, piers and darkling shores appeared like something in a dream. Lights were lit in this somber dusk, and lanterned craft came and passed, a ruby light gleaming here, a green lantern gliding there, and golden lamps glowing in clusters on the opposite shore, with vast stretches of mysterious night in between.

Jan felt happy. This was a wonderful evening, surely, here by the darkening river, and with Karen at his side.

JAN WOULD NEED HIS PATIENCE MUCH SOONER THAN HE expected. For a few days later there was another sudden change in Karen. It almost seemed as though she had tried too hard to please him, and that now followed a reaction. She drooped and became apathetic.

Jan pretended to notice nothing. A passing mood. It would soon disappear.

He loved Karen, and so he thought her beautiful always. He did not see that she grew wan and that her face became thin and transparent. She would be in bed when he left for the dock in the morning, and when he returned home at night he found her stretched out on the couch as though she were only half alive.

Finally he became alarmed. "Don't you feel well?" he said. "Karen, what's the matter?"

"Oh! . . ." She continued staring through the window, staring at nothing.

He took her hand and fondled it. "Tell me," he insisted. "What is it?"

"Let me be," she said wearily.

"Now, look here. I'll make a nice supper, and you'll feel better."

"Don't want anything. Leave me alone."

But he busied himself in the kitchen, then forced her to come and eat. While they sat at table a vegetable peddler cried out his wares in the street. Karen gave a cynical laugh. "Listen to him. Why is a man like that born? What does he live for?"

"He's doing his part, I guess. Everyone is here for something."

"Pooh!" She picked at her food. "Why was I born?" she asked ironically. "What am I here for?"

"You shouldn't speak like that. A woman like you—beautiful and everything."

"Ha! Hell of a lot I've to be thankful for."

"Well, I have, anyway."

"What do you mean?"

"I have you, for one thing."

She tossed her head.

He continued trying to bolster her low spirits. But she mocked him. She was sardonic. And from time to time she threw at him a cold, hostile glance.

After they had risen from the table he came and put his arms around her. But she tore herself away from him. "Oh, let me be!" she cried. "Don't touch me, or I'll scream."

They were still lingering in the kitchen when the outside door opened and a pretty blonde girl came in. She was about twenty, with the corn-fed look of a midwestern farm girl, this in spite of the dark circles under her eyes and the arty clothes she wore. She came into their hall as if the place belonged to her. But on meeting Karen in the kitchen door she stared blankly and slapped her hand to her forehead. "Oh, excuse me," she laughed. "How stupid! Here I walk into the wrong apartment."

Jan nodded pleasantly. But Karen was jerked out of her listless mood and glared angrily at the attractive intruder.

Her young neighbor seemed in no hurry to leave. And

whether by accident or intent—it was Jan she looked at. “Excuse me,” she repeated. “I’m so sorry.” At last she backed toward the door. And after another glance at Jan she left.

Jan chuckled. “Funny thing. She walks into the wrong apartment.”

“Why doesn’t she watch where she’s going?” Karen snorted. “I’m not certain it was a mistake at that.”

“Sure it was. She lives on the top floor. The kid goes to some kind of art school, I think.”

“So, you do know her!”

“I didn’t say that. I’ve met her on the stairs once or twice.”

“I see! . . . And what did she have to say to you?”

“Nothing. Said hello, that’s all.”

“You’re sure?”

“Why, of course. Don’t be silly.”

“She’s a slut,” Karen decided. But her suspicions seemed alleviated, and she relapsed into apathy once more.

THEN SHE CHANGED AGAIN. OR—WHAT HAD HAPPENED? A few days later, when Jan came home from work, she was very gay. It pleased him. Her depression had gone. Now he must humor her and keep her in this happy frame of mind.

“Hey, kid,” he greeted her. “Feeling good, huh?”

“You bet. Like a million dollars.”

“That’s fine.”

Her face was flushed. She had unbuttoned her blouse at the throat, and Jan’s eyes were drawn to her bosom, high and white like two snow drifts among her silk lingerie. Her head thrown back she took a few gay dance steps across the floor and sang a snatch from *The Merry Widow*.

“That’s the girl,” Jan grinned. “Keep your chin up!”

“Come on!” she cried. “Dance with me.”

“Wait. I got to wash first.”

“Whoopee!”

He went to his room and started to change from his work clothes, glad that she had snapped out of her morbid mood. He had never seen her in such high spirits.

She was still capering on the floor after he had spruced himself up. “Hey, you!” she called to him and snapped her fingers in the air.

His smile was a bit dubious now. Good to see her gay, of course. But . . . in spite of her playfulness something about her repelled him. He could not quite make her out. She did not radiate the warmth happy people do.

"Whoopee!" she cried. "Makin' whoopee!"

She ran into the kitchen. When she returned a minute later, singing *Maxim*, the strident note in her voice was even more pronounced, and her eyes had a peculiar cold, shining look. She struck a dramatic pose and flourished a cigarette in her hand. And yet, she was slender-waisted and seductive as she whirled and sang, lifting her skirt to show her silk-stockinged legs.

But hectic spots burned on her cheeks, and her blue eyes glittered too brightly for good wholesome fun. Jan tried to calm her. "So, what do we eat tonight?" he said. "And when?"

"Eat when the hell you please," she retorted.

He was taken aback at her truculence. "Don't get me wrong," he said softly. "I'm just asking you."

"Oh, don't bother me," she cut him, her eyes flashing angrily.

"Well, for Christ's sake," he shot back. "What's the matter with you? I'm just trying to be nice."

"Who cares?"

His face reddened. He opened his mouth to reply, but checked himself and just looked at her.

"Mind your own business," she continued peevishly, "and you'll be a damn sight better off." She continued her solo performance, one slim arm raised in the air, her skirt lifted.

Jan was puzzled and disturbed as he crossed the floor to his room. But glancing around he saw her run into the kitchen again, and suspicion struck him. He walked softly to the kitchen door, saw her open a closet and take out a whisky bottle which she uncorked.

Stepping forward he snatched the bottle from her. "So that's

what's the matter with you tonight! I thought you acted queer."

"Was feeling miserable," she said defiantly.

She tried to take the bottle from him, but he held it out of her reach. "No, you don't," he said firmly. "Not on your life."

"What's the harm if I take a drink?" she protested. "Makes me feel good."

"No, you won't have it."

And as she fought with him for the bottle, he remembered the doctor's words: *Drink is worse than poison to her.*

"I want it!" she cried. "Give it to me, damn you!"

He pushed her off, looking at the nearly untouched contents of the bottle. It seemed difficult to believe that so small an amount of liquor could make that much change in her:

*People like her should never touch drink.*

She struggled with him. "You devil! You like it yourself. You go to the speakeasy and booze. So what's wrong if I have a drink?"

"It isn't good for you. Yes, I do like a drink now and then. I can carry my liquor. You can't. But I swear I shall never touch another drop in my life—for your sake."

"My sake!" she taunted him.

"Yes, for your sake." He smashed the bottle in the sink. Karen turned on him fiercely, scratched him and kicked his legs with her pointed heels. His face had grown pale, but he waited silently for her outburst to spend itself. At last she flung herself down on a chair and sobbed.

Walking over to her he touched her arm. "Karen . . ."

"I feel so miserable!" she sobbed, her face buried in her hands. "So miserable! I can't bear to live."

"It will blow over," he said gently. "Things will be better, you'll see. Just let us have a little faith."

"Things will never be better," she wept.

"They will. You'll see. And as long as you want me I'll be here."

AND THE NEXT DAY KAREN SHOWING DEEP REMORSE AT her behavior. She did not say anything about it, and neither did Jan. He thought it a pity that a little liquor should so coarsen her. This morning she was sweet and repentant and totally different from the shrill woman of the night before.

He drank his coffee, and having kissed her on the cheek he went to the docks. Another sweltering day rolled up. At noon the blazing river surface looked like tinfoil, and in the afternoon moisture veritably dripped out of the air. The smoke from tugboat and ship rose straight up, for nowhere along the river was there even a faint breath of wind.

At about two in the afternoon the Stevedore came and shouted that Jan's gang should knock off for the day. But not because of the heat. A consignment of cargo destined for this particular hold had failed to arrive in time, and none of the bosses tried to provide other work for the men. Such work could easily have been found, but to dismiss the men was easier still. If work should pile up at another point, or at another pier, a stretch of overtime would take care of that. Or a batch of extras could be hired.

"Come here!" the Stevedore called Jan. "Got a job for you.



And you," he summoned another regular. "Get over to number four hatch."

The rest of the men had to go home, however. They were disappointed and glum, but didn't dare show it. Many of them had worked as little as one or two days a week during the whole summer and had stood in the Shape morning after morning and noon after noon, only to be turned away. This morning they had been hired, and now already at two o'clock they were told to knock off. Which meant they would not only lose the afternoon's pay, but be struck out of the gang and compelled to start from scratch tomorrow again. And the chances were that none of them would be hired.

"Dear Jesus," muttered one frustrated oldtimer. "I thought maybe I'd get in a couple of days at last. And now look. It ain't fair. Here I used to work regular an' I'm still as good as any man. What they want me to do—starve to death?"

Jan joined the gang at the number four hatch. Up on ship's deck Tony was running the winch. Sweat streamed down his face.

The hours dragged on. When the whistles blew at five o'clock, work stopped with what sounded like a great universal sigh of relief.

Jan thought it much too hot to stay indoors that night, so after supper he took Karen for a stroll. Tonight they walked over to Washington Square and sat on a bench, Karen fanning herself with a folded newspaper. She had on a plain white dress which made her look very girlish and young. Jan's heart went out to her. She was paler than usual tonight, and a little drawn, and somehow that made him feel even more tender towards her. They sat in silence under the trees, with glowing lamplight weaving among the summer leaves. Glancing at Karen, Jan thought that wasn't it wonderful to be with her, even if they did have their upsets now and then? The dear girl!—So troubled! He wished he could free her from all her

difficulties. And perhaps it could be done. . . . Patience. Only patience would do it.

He took to looking at the people around them. Here came a bent old man in a white linen suit, and supporting himself on a cane. A Village poet or philosopher. On the benches facing the dingy South Side studios a crowd of Italian boys and girls in gaudy get-ups were necking and making love in sublime disregard of their surroundings, while on another bench a ragged derelict was sitting fast asleep. Strolling along the dusky paths came shirt-sleeved working people like himself, out to cool off. And there were arty young men and thin young women looking as if they had read too many books and drunk too much whisky and stayed up until all hours too many nights. There were blabbery college boys and strutting flappers with rolled stockings and skirts that ended far above their knees. And there were many pretty girls. But not one of them as beautiful as Karen.

And now—mysteriously—he had a conviction that they were bound together forever, he and she! A startling thought! Not long ago he had felt like a stranger in her presence. Yet now he felt that they belonged together.

And with the same conviction he felt that their Village stay would not last long. Not only did it cost much more than he could afford, but he hated all this pretense and silly make-believe. Here were too many poseurs and too much cheap vanity that he should want to live near it. And he was constantly stung by the supercilious attitude of the young men and women he came across. They held forth about *Labor* and the *Proletariat* and *the Revolution*, yet each time he happened to brush up against them he felt their condescension. Why, he was nothing but a longshoreman!

All right. He wanted none of them, so that evened things up. He was a man of the river and the ships. To hell with this crowd! Sure, they knew everything about books. But he hated

to hear them talk and talk. They would start their gab at the drop of a hat.

He knew he and Karen wouldn't stay here long. But how they would leave, and where they would go after that—he didn't know. And he didn't worry about it. A man must meet each day as it came.

Still he longed to live near the river. He thought of Nils and envied him his little snug cabin on the barge. Nils! . . . Now there was a man after his heart. A fellow who knew a thing or two, stuff about the seven seas, blizzards, typhoons and men's work. Nils had studied and gone to school for all that. Jan knew he had his master's ticket entitling him to command ships sailing anywhere on any sea. Nils said something when he spoke, words one remembered and was glad to have heard. And he could use his hands for something else besides waving them in the air.

Karen touched his arm. "Let's walk around a little."

They walked slowly under the lamplit trees, and he observed her secretly. She looked sad and subdued. Still worrying about last night? he wondered. Foolish girl! He had already forgotten it.

And that was one strength he had—he never remembered unhappy things. He wished that Karen, too, would learn to forget. The past often burdened her. But fortunately that man Dick didn't seem to occupy her thoughts any more. She had talked to Jan about him and so eliminated her resentment. Jan now had a rather good idea of what happened. Dick was a rich man, and promised Karen heaven on earth. But she disappointed him, they quarreled, and he struck her and drove her from his house.

Jan hummed a tune as they walked along in the summer dusk. Now Karen came to a halt. "Look at those nice old houses," she said. "Don't you like them?"

She had stopped before the stately brick houses on the north

side of the Square. Green vines were creeping up the red brick façades, and there were trees and hedges in front. Jan didn't know the history of these venerable dwellings, nor their memories of an aristocratic past. But he sensed their dignity and reserve.

He nodded thoughtfully. "They look fine," he said. And as he watched them again he felt so much the stranger here. He could not have felt more the foreigner had he stumbled upon this Washington Square over two centuries ago when it was virgin land where the Indian roamed, a home of screaming birds, an outlying wilderness of marsh land and hills through which the Minetta Brook wound its way to the Hudson.

A horn blew over on Fifth Avenue. With grinding brakes a taxi swerved aside from a lumbering bus and rolled out of the asphalt-smooth and softly lighted avenue.

"Come," Karen said. "Let's move on."

"Where are we going now?"

"Let's walk down Eighth Street. I'd like to look in the shop windows."

"Okay."

He didn't care where they were going as long as he had Karen at his side. So they walked along Eighth Street with its many specialty shops, book stores, tea rooms and arty holes-in-the-wall. Karen had a good time window-shopping, looking at jewelry, hand-embroidered smocks, colorful scarfs and modernistic china. Jazz music began to blare in the cafés, for it was now the time when the sophisticated crowds flocked to their haunts to talk and argue and smoke endless cigarettes.

"And where do we go now?" he asked when they reached Sixth Avenue.

She hesitated. But just then the deep-throated bellowing from a ship appeared to answer his question. Karen smiled. "Listen to your friend!"

They both laughed, for the signal seemed such a comical coincidence.

"I know what you'd like," she said teasingly. "Suppose we walk down to the river and then home."

He took her arm. "Kid, you know me!"

Her heavy mood was leaving her. He glanced at her slim white figure, and pressed her arm. She responded. "What a girl," he thought. "What a girl!"

So they walked along Christopher Street, crossing Hudson and Greenwich, down to somber West Street by the river, listening to the yappings of tugs and the sounds of other craft nosing among the piers. Pale summer stars shone high above on the dark sky.

And as they strolled along, arm-in-arm, they passed other kinds of stores than those in the Village—ship chandlers, seamen's outfitters and steamship suppliers. No batiks here, and no fanciful pottery. But sou'westers and oilcoats in which some seaman or other would meet a stormy night in the North Sea. No handpainted lamp shades were sold here, and no oil dabs by dubious local talent. But sturdy sea bags, firemen's caps, durable work gloves, steel hooks for longshoremen, sweat shirts and rags with which to mop your brow after you have fired the furnaces under the broiling sun of the tropics. Yet these waterfront stores also catered to the lighter side of life, for here were colored souvenir cards, charms and little gilded Statues of Liberty for Jack Ashore's sweetheart, wherever he had left her.

"Feel that salt air," Jan said.

"It's cool," she agreed and squeezed his hand.

The river craft hooted in the dark. They walked past the open pier at Barrow Street, a glowing lantern marking the coal barges moored in the slip. Past "El Mundo Bar and Restaurant" where the bartender was supposed to sell ginger ale to thirsty seamen ashore after a month-long voyage through hot Southern seas! In the bar window was a beautiful ship model encased in a box of glass. "Isn't that something!" said Jan.

“You don’t know how much patience it takes to make a ship like that.”

Her blue eyes twinkled. “I know. You river men are wonderful!”

He grinned. And he kissed her right there, in the dark waterfront street.

HAVING TURNED INTO THE VILLAGE THEY SOON REACHED the house. In the hall Karen told Jan about a letter in the mail box. "Came this morning," she said. "But I couldn't find my key."

He opened the box, and gave a start as he glanced at the envelope.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Anything wrong?"

He slipped the letter into his pocket. "No . . . it is from my mother. It's only that I haven't written home for so long."

They entered the flat, Karen going to her room, Jan into his. When alone he looked at the envelope once more. The letter was from Eliska, and he had recognized her handwriting at once. What's more, he could tell that she had been very disturbed when she wrote to him.

Now, what would this letter contain? . . . Accusations? Reproaches? Was she condemning him for having ruined her life?

He tore the envelope open and unfolded the sheet, surprised to see but a few lines. So she thought that little of him! Only a few angry words in farewell!

But having read the first sentence his expression changed. "Dear Janko," she wrote. "*I am so worried about you. Are you ill perhaps?* . . ."

She called him *Janko*! Used the endearing form of his name!

He continued reading: "*Your letter made me very sad, and I cried all day. You say you will never come home and that I should not wait. But I think I understand. Things have gone badly for you, Janko. But you don't want me to worry. . . .*"

Crumpling the letter in his hand he remembered that night many years ago, when he said farewell to her on the twilight mountain pasture in Bohemia: "*I will wait for you,*" she had said. "*I'll not even dance while you are away.*"

He heard Karen draw the water for her bath. She was happy tonight, and hummed a tune. He looked down at the letter. "*. . . You were always like that. You never wrote when things went wrong. But things will be well with you again, I know. You have worked so hard. I will wait for you ten more years if I must. I miss you terribly.*"

"*I feel sad, so I won't write much today. My eyes are red. I have been crying so much. Let me hear from you soon.*"

That was the message. And something was added in a shaky old script in the margin: "*Your mother sends her greetings. Come home, my son. If you have no money for a ticket, perhaps I can borrow some and send you. Our farm is so nice. We need you.*"

He folded the letter, slowly, unaware of the noise from the Village street outside.

Now, what should he do? He paced the floor. He must write to her and tell her the truth—that he loved somebody else. She said she would wait for him. No! . . . God, no! She must not wait another day! He had caused her suffering enough. No more!

Half an hour later Karen came into his room, in her pajamas, just as he was sealing the envelope. He tried to hide it, but too late for her quick eyes. "What is that?" she asked. "A letter?"



"Yes, I've just written home."

"You're holding back something. What is it?"

"Okay, then. You might as well know. That letter—it was from Eliska."

"Oh, really! What did she have to say?"

"I wish you wouldn't ask me. Isn't it enough if I tell you I'm aboveboard with you?"

"No, I want to know. Tell me."

"Well . . . she wants me to come home. Guess I didn't make things clear in the first letter I wrote."

"The first? When was that?"

"While we stayed at Mrs. Blom's place."

"You wrote to her then? I didn't know."

"I told you. But I guess you've forgotten. I wrote that I wouldn't be coming home."

"You did!" she cried softly.

"Sure. What did you expect?"

She looked at him intently and tenderly. "Jan, Jan. You're a good sort. But what have you written to her now?"

"I had to come clean. Had to tell her just how things are."

"Told her about me?"

"Sure. Told her that I love you."

"You wrote that. Oh, you nice big boy! . . ." And suddenly she leaned forward and kissed him. "You're a dear," she murmured, and her voice was warm with an emotion he had never before sensed in her. She seemed to be stirred deep within her—stirred as a woman.

He pulled her to him and kissed her, and she was soft and yielding. And he rose and carried her into her room, to her bed, then switched off the light.

She trembled with anxiety as he took her in his arms. "Jan! . . ." She raised her hand in a gesture of fear. But he paid no heed. He missed the suppressed cry in her voice. Her head fell back, and she cried out once more.

SOMETHING WAS WRONG. HE KNEW THAT SOMETHING WAS utterly wrong. In some indefinable way he was separated from her, and his ardor chilled. He looked down on her unmoved face. She lay limp in his arms, motionless, cool.

He stared at her pale features, so beautiful in this summer night's dusk, but as though without life. Now more than ever before her face reminded him of carved marble. It was stamped with a sadness that cut him to the quick.

Fear took hold of him. He still breathed heavily, but now his fire died down. He raised himself on his elbow, staring at the white stillness of her face.

"Karen! . . ." He called her name.

She did not answer, did not hear him.

He called her name again, and shook her. And at last, after an eternity of waiting, she opened her eyes and gazed at him, uncomprehending as one waking from a dream.

"What is it?" he asked in a strained and unnatural voice. "My God, you frighten me!"

She slowly stroked her brow. Then her gaze snapped back to the present, and her eyes filled with anguish.

"Karen! Karen!" There were both dread and tenderness in

his voice. "Jesus and Mary!" he said huskily. "Tell me what's wrong?"

She made no answer, but moved her head away.

Taking her in his arms again he turned her face to him. "Tell me what it is."

She lifted her gaze, and it seemed as if she would speak. But instead she retreated within herself.

He waited. He was thinking, thinking. "Karen," he said at last, his voice taut and strained, "it . . . it means nothing to you?"

Still she did not answer him.

"Tell me," he demanded. "It means nothing to you?"

"No," she said, in a small fearful whisper.

Then looking at him she saw in the half-light that his face was hard and lined. He still held her clasped to him, but now his grip slackened and he let her fall away at his side.

She touched his sunburned arm, so dark in contrast to the rest of his body. "Jan, please, I cannot help it," she wailed. "I can't help the way I am." She had grown panicky now. And her voice was like her hands—helpless and childlike, with some maturity lacking as though in a way she had never quite grown to her full stature as a woman. "Jan," she implored, "don't go away from me!"

He swung his legs over the edge of the bed. Karen crept up to him and put her arms around him. "I was afraid it would happen," she continued. "But please don't go. I'll kill myself if you leave me. I cannot help it. Oh, my God, my God! Why should I ever have been born!" Then she broke into hysterical tears and threw herself face down on the bed.

He felt he could no longer endure the sultry warmth in the room. It was a small narrow room, and he felt shut in. He must get outdoors to breathe. He wanted to walk, walk.

Stepping from the bed he was followed by her pleading: "Please, don't go away from me! Jan, I beg you!"

In his room again he put on his clothes, hurriedly. As he was about to leave, Karen came with a robe thrown around her white shoulders. She stretched out her arms to him, seized his hand and begged him: "Tell me where you're going. You will come back, won't you? Please, Jan! I do love you! Oh, I felt so close to you tonight. I swear I did. Couldn't you see it?"

"Just let me go for a while," he said dully. "I must be by myself. I must walk. I choke in here."

"But you'll be back, won't you? Promise me!"

"Yes, yes. Go to bed. I'll be back."

Still she clung to him. "Oh, I wish you wouldn't go. I wish you'd come and speak to me."

"But, Jesus Christ, what is there to say?"

"Oh, Jan, it isn't as you think. I do love you."

He turned a wild dark look on her.

"You don't believe me. Oh, I don't blame you in a way. But it is true. I swear to God that I've been coming closer to you all the time. And tonight . . . I was so happy. I felt so warmly for you. And I thought . . . I thought . . . oh, Jan, don't leave me!"

He had been listening to her intently, and seemed to get a better hold on himself. "Go to bed," he said. "I must be by myself for awhile."

She dropped his hand, only her eyes entreating him.

Opening the door he glanced back at her, his expression beaten and hurt. "Don't worry," he said. "I'll be back."

He strode down the deserted street, his footsteps echoing in the night. The windows were dark, only here and there a faint glow visible behind a drawn shade.

Driven by his agitation he walked without knowing where he went, haunted by the expression of sadness which had stamped Karen's face when she was plunged in that mysterious dream, or sleep. Her regret, her trembling voice: "No, Jan . . . No!"

Then—would not everything be over between them? How could it help him that he loved her? How could it help her?

A ship's growling signal was heard out of the dark. His rambling had taken him to the docks. A night-blue dusk enveloped piers and black-masted ships. A truck thundered away down the street.

Karen! Karen!

A glowing lantern flashed. Two dock workers passed him. He was thinking of Karen. Oh, God, if this had not happened! Could it ever be undone? Would they ever find each other now? Yet he remembered how he sensed a feeling of warmth surge up within her only a few hours ago when they talked about that letter. He thought now he had won her, now they had found each other at last. And then this void fell open between them!

But he recalled other things she said. Did she not plead with him to stay? . . . But why? *When it meant nothing to her.*

Still she had felt warmly towards him. He had sensed that, and hope flared up in him. Perhaps it was only that she had so far to go before warmth would possess her completely. He did not know. She was such a strange woman. He did not understand her.

He walked about the docks until he calmed himself, then returned to the house. As he stepped inside the door she called his name. "Jan! Jan!"

She ran to meet him, threw her arms around him and rested her head against his breast, sobbing, whispering his name. "Please, Jan, don't be angry with me."

"Angry," he said. "I'm not angry. But . . ."

"Oh, but I do care for you!" she cried, looking up eagerly to assure him. And she was like a child again, so happy that he had returned, so anxious to make things right. "Just be patient with me, Jan, won't you?"

He caressed her, and held her pressed to him. They went into her room and she lay down on her bed, and he sat by her side, holding her hand, and they did not speak. He was thinking, wondering. Perhaps things would be right. Perhaps in ways he could not foresee.

And after a long time when he looked down, he saw that she had fallen asleep.

Quietly freeing his hand from hers he rose, and stood watching her. Then he tiptoed out of the room, closed the door softly and returned to his own quarters.

A WEEK PASSED. AND STILL ANOTHER. AT THE DOCKS IT was now the slackest and yet most strenuous season of the year, with sweat-drenched longshoremen laboring in sultry heat. Loading flour was a task they loathed above all others during days when the mercury climbed to the ninety mark.

Jan belonged to one of the dock gangs, but having worked on ships for many years he knew every trick related to the art of stowing cargo. So one morning he was ordered down into one of the holds to take the place of a man who had collapsed from the heat. The ship was loading flour, the sacks arriving both by rail and water routes.

The flour barges were now jockeyed alongside the ship by stubborn tugs. Wire falls and winches were got in shape up on ship's deck, and after some preliminary grinding of machinery and hissing of steam the first draft sped aloft, the batch of flour sacks held firmly in the grip of a canvas sling.

Down in the hold the men looked up and saw the great bundle of sacks hovering for a split second against the unclouded blue of the summer sky. Then the draft dropped, with loose flour spilling into the air. The dust clogged mouths and nostrils, formed a sticky paste on necks and arms, and made

palms slippery as the men seized the 280-pound bags by the ears and carried them into the far corners of the cargo space.

"Work har-rder," growled Pat Mulligan who was a member of the gang, flour dust powdering his graying red hair. "It's the gr-reat words o' President Coolidge," he said sardonically. "We ought to wor-rk much har-rder'n we do."

Dodging a down-coming draft Jan heard another grizzled oldtimer morosely tell a pal that he had only worked two days this week, and that's probably the way it would be all summer long. It gave Jan a stab to hear "Humpy" Dillon speak. The man had half a dozen children, and Jan could remember when Humpy belonged to a regular gang like himself and earned a decent wage. But he hurt his back in an accident, lost out and dropped into the ranks of the *shenangoes*.

Suppose it should happen to me, Jan thought. It was only since he had Karen to care for that he began to worry about his status down here at the docks. But now . . . Accidents occurred all the time. When you go to work in the morning, the men were wont to say, you never know what hour you're going to be carried out.

Flour dust filled the hold. Watching old Humpy, Jan thought the man had decayed fearfully in a couple of years. But that's what happened to those who lost their status as regulars. When they dropped down among the hordes of the *shenangoes*, decline set in. Regular work makes regular men. Yet of the fifty thousand longshoremen in the Port of New York only a small number were in the regular class—and even these subject to the whims of the weather, of storm and fog and tide, and the cyclical burst of trade activity depending on the season and the world's demand for goods.

At noon Jan came across Tony in the lunch room. Tony's black hair stuck to his sweaty brow, and like the rest of the men in this killing heat he looked hollow-eyed and pale. But he was full of great news about himself. "Whaddaya know,"



he cried, slapping Jan on the back. "Gotta congratulate. Me! I'm gonna get married next week."

"No fooling!" said Jan. "I didn't even know you were going steady. Comes sudden to me."

"Sudden is right," Tony laughed, fingering the spot at his throat where on his free and frivolous Saturday nights he used to sport a boldly curved crimson tie. "Sudden, you said it," he chuckled, with a sly side-glance at his friend. "I got a surprise myself. Well, I was gonna get stuck sooner or later, I guess, so it might as well be now. She's a good kid, though."

"Well, I hope you'll be happy."

"Happy—sure. You know me!"

Leaving the lunch room they stepped out into the sizzling sunshine that poured down on the Hudson, on docks and ships; Jan with his hand on the shining longshoreman's steel hook he carried in his belt; wavy-haired Tony with his cap rakishly on his ear, and chewing a toothpick, while humming one of the popular songs in his inexhaustible repertoire:

*A-va-lon . . .*

IN THE AFTERNOON WORD WAS PASSED AROUND AMONG THE trusted men that a meeting of sorts would be held in Al's speakeasy that night. Freddie Reed wanted another go at them. But they were warned not to blab more than need be.

The fellows knew pretty well what Freddie had to say, and with an uneasy twinge they thought of the ruckus he might start. An odd guy, Freddie Reed. An educated man like him, and not one of them—why should he get himself into a jam? And a runt like that! Bigger and stronger men had been knocked cold by those hired thugs who see to it that the long-shoremen don't fall out of line. And whether those toughs were paid by the shipowners or the union heads—what did it matter? A killed man is dead, and no one likes to join him.

But here this pint-sized Freddie stuck out his thin neck. No one knew much about him. He was an American, and that was queer for a waterfront rebel. Whenever in the past anyone had kicked against the system down here he had been foreign-born, one who had waited in the Shape day after day without being picked, one who had stood in the soaking rain until fed up with it. But Freddie! Someone had said his father was a New England clergyman. Could be. So why didn't the

son preach in the pulpit on Sunday mornings? Would be a lot safer for him.

The men discussed Freddie while they worked. "Guess it's a hiring hall he's after again," one of them said. For last winter Freddie had suddenly made his appearance here, and gone from group to group, from one street corner to the other, talking to the longshoremen and asking them to help him start a rank-and-file union. "I hate to see men being treated worse than cattle!" he said. "Why shouldn't you at least have hiring halls to protect you from rain and snow when winter comes?" And he raised his voice against the kickback and other abuses, and against the sloth of the AFL officials who backed the reactionary shipowners and tolerated the shape-up.

The fellows were mulling it over, while the unloading continued with cargo drafts creaking, drivers honking their horns, and foremen yelling to speed up the work.

Old Jimmy McGee hooked the sling onto a wire fall, then flung out his hand in signal to the hatchman up on ship's deck. The draft of boxes flew aloft. "Damn it if I'm goin'," he muttered, stacking up the next draft. "It pays to keep your mouth shut."

And that was the opinion of most of the regulars. Freddie seemed like a good sort, all right, but the men were both suspicious and afraid. They had been cheated so often. And if they did get hiring halls, what would happen? There had been talk of spreading the work so that each man got a share. Well. Fair enough. Only right that every man should get a chance—even if there were already twice as many willing hands as could make a living here at the docks, with drifters coming from the city all the time.

But as for Freddie! . . . "No, damn it, I ain't goin'," Jimmy said again, grimly. The others nodded. Never good for a man's health to squawk. Those who grumbled in the past were amazingly liable to accidents on dark nights, were knifed

by hoodlums, had rocks thrown at their heads, or were pushed into the dock.

Or it might happen that one morning they suddenly found themselves overlooked by the hiring Stevedore. Even after years as a regular. And that—that was the beginning of the end.

The safest thing was to keep a deadpan.

ONLY A HANDFUL OF LONGSHOREMEN SHOWED UP IN AL'S speakeasy after the five o'clock whistle. And, even at that, you could always pretend you only came for a drink. Let Freddie talk.

Tony and Jan went. Tony claimed he wanted to celebrate his coming marriage with a shot of straight whisky. And Jan said okay. A drink would wash down some of the damned wheat dust which clogged his dry throat. Not until he raised his glass to salute Tony and wish him well in matrimony did he remember his pledge to Karen. But, what the hell! He couldn't disappoint his pal on an important occasion like this. So, "Here goes, and good luck to you," he said.

They were early. Freddie had not shown up yet. Glancing into the dark nook where those underworld characters had been sitting the last time, Jan saw only a couple of hardbitten longshoremen. But though the gangsters were not here, the evening paper carried a lurid story of the activities of their kind. Tony handed the paper to Jan. "Hot stuff, huh."

Jan ran his eye along the headline: *Government Agents Battle Rumrummers in Armored Bastion. Three Killed.*

There followed a detailed story of the battle. In the dark of night government raiders had swooped down on an old man-

sion at Atlantic Highlands, and were met by a fusilade of machine-gun bullets. For the innocent-looking mansion had been secretly converted into the headquarters of a powerful rumrunning gang.

The battle had lasted for hours, and it was not until the government men had thrown dozens of tear-gas bombs through the windows, and so forced the gangsters to surrender, that they discovered why the rumrunners had been able to hold out so long in spite of heavy fire from the government raiders' guns. The rumrunners had coated the lower walls with sheet steel which no bullets could penetrate. And inside the mansion a squad of expert marksmen had been posted, armed with pistols and machine guns.

Jan gave the paper back to his friend. "Tough birds," he said, and again involuntarily his eyes sought the corner where those shady customers had been sitting the other night.

Freddie came through the door a few minutes later. He gave Jan a friendly nod, although they hardly knew each other. Jan couldn't help smiling, for Freddie looked so oddly out of place here, with his thin and scholarly face, keen eyes and aquiline nose. His trousers were baggy as usual, and he carried his tweed jacket on his arm.

He looked disappointed when he saw how few men had come. "Is this all? . . ."

Then he turned to cadaverous Al behind the bar. "Hope you don't mind?" he said. "We won't stay long."

Al waved a bony hand. "I'm in business, ain't I? So why should I mind customers? Listen, buddy. I don't hear so well, if you know what I mean. My ears have gone back on me. I don't see so good either. And I'm a dope."

Freddie cracked a smile. "All right."

He faced the group of longshoremen. There were six or seven Irish, stout and dependable oldtimers sucking their pipes. They had come out of curiosity more than anything else.

Or, perhaps, because it was inherent in their nature to take to a cussed little scrapper like Freddie Reed. Jimmy McGee was one of them. He had said he wouldn't come, but had changed his mind. Alongside him stood a tow-headed Scandinavian.

"All right," Freddie said. "You know me, I guess. You know what I stand for. But before I begin there's one thing I want to make clear. Word has gone around that I'm taking orders from Moscow. Now, that's a lie. I wouldn't mind so much being called a Communist. You know—from each according to his ability, to each according to his need. I don't think we can improve on that. Too bad they had to add violence and bloodshed. I don't believe in either. And I don't believe in the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, or any other dictatorship. I believe in reasonable men.

"So, that's that . . ." He threw an eye at the door as a few more longshoremen came in and joined his listeners. Jan was leaning against the counter. Several other dock hands and sailors had gathered at the bar, some with drinks in their hands. And now still another man came up, quietly, mingling with the rest. He was dressed like a longshoreman, but Jan had never seen him before. Perhaps he worked at one of the piers further up, near Twenty-third Street. Somehow Jan didn't like him, although he couldn't tell why. The man was bull-headed, short and thick-set, with little bright eyes.

Freddie was talking. "There's plenty wrong down here at the docks, but I've decided to tackle only one thing for a start. I am trying to get you hiring halls. That isn't asking for a hell of a lot, is it? Every horse has a stable. Why shouldn't a longshoreman have a shelter when it's raining and the wind blows from the sea? But you don't have one. You belong to a union, and you pay dues, and the union officials draw salaries like bank presidents, but here you shape up under the open sky the way longshoremen did a hundred years ago. For God's sake, wake up! Where's your pride?"

As Freddie drew his breath one of the fellows made a crack

about the good hourly wage the union forced the shipping companies to pay. "Gooda pay," he said smugly, shrugged and threw out his hands. "Me maka lotsa money. No kick."

Freddie's eyes flashed. "That's the mentality of an ox. Fling him an extra handful of hay and he's satisfied. Is that all you ask for from life—a few cents more per hour? For that you'll stand in any weather and beg for a day's work; for that you'll take any amount of abuse from the foremen, let them kick you around, and kick you out of your gang when you're worn out."

He was angry, his thin face flushed. The men watched him respectfully as he strode back and forth before them, trying to cool down. Then he once more faced the fellow who had spoken a moment ago. "And listen," he said, talking evenly now as if afraid he would explode. "Does it matter how much a man is paid by the hour—if he only works one hour a week?"

He allowed his question to sink in before he continued. "Are there not hundreds of you who don't work even that much? So why babble about the hourly wage?"

He addressed himself to the rest of the group, the old Irishmen who had long memories of life on the waterfront. "You want to live like men," he said. "You want to be able to support your families. You are entitled to a measure of security. Why, I ask, must the docks be the refuge of all the thousands who fail in the city? Let the city take care of its own. And they ought to be taken care of. But let the longshoreman have his weekly job in peace. He's as good as any man."

The Irishmen looked at him gravely, and old Jimmy McGee perked up his ears. "So you don't think we all should share our jobs with them that come down here?" he asked.

"I don't," Freddie shot back. "If there's work for—let's say thirty thousand men here along the waterfront, well, let's try as near as possible to give it to thirty thousand men, and not to forty or fifty thousand, and make beggars of you all. I know the shipowners claim they need a surplus for days when there's



a rush. Well, and so it's the shipowners' duty to support those men."

"It's never been that way," Jimmy said.

"I know. That's why I am here."

The Irishmen grinned and exchanged quick looks. Even the Scandinavian smiled. But a couple of the others shuffled out of the crowd and left the room. Freddie glared after them. "I have no prejudice against any race," he said to his little group of oldtimers. "And nationality and religion don't matter a damn to me. But I despise those who lack a man's pride."

The oldtimers chuckled.

"And as for the union leaders," Freddie added sarcastically, "from your president down—of course they welcome as many men as possible here at the docks. *They* should refuse initiation fees and monthly dues! Then where would they get their big salaries from?"

No one dared chuckle at that. You never knew who might be around to listen and to watch.

"There's going to be a change down here," Freddie said. "But I'm afraid there'll be trouble first, and the cops will do a lot of slugging. They're out to keep order, you know. And the shape-up is supposed to be in order. AFL says so. Hiring halls are not."

He continued talking, but Jan's attention strayed, for he was bothered by that fellow who had sidled over to the bar a little while ago. There was something odd about him. But what?

"Now, as for hiring halls," Freddie said. "Don't think that's anything new. In ports like Liverpool, London and Hamburg they've had them since back in 1912. A few years ago they tried them in Seattle and Portland. And the system works. It's only in New York that nobody gives a damn. Human life doesn't seem to be valued much here. The shipping companies build bigger and bigger ships, the government helps them with bigger and bigger subsidies, and you'd think there would be a

couple of bucks left for a hiring hall. But no. Nobody cares.

"Don't let anybody tell you work can't be regulated down here on the waterfront. It can. And as for that surplus of men the shipowners claim they need—they've taken care of that in the European ports. For one thing, there they know how to use a telephone. Here they don't seem to know how. Haven't I seen it myself? You fellows shape up at—say pier 54, and two hundred of you are turned away. At the same time they're a hundred men short up at pier 60. Now why can't they have a hiring hall and a telephone and have the men come where there's work to be had? Or if there are too many men on this side of the river, and they're short over in Hoboken, why can't the hiring Stevedore pick up a telephone and have a launch take the men across? But they don't. Selfish bastards! And this an American port! The greatest port in the world!"

He waved his hand. "That's all I'm for right now. Just hiring halls. If we can get them, I know all the rest will come. Think it over. Tell the other fellows about it. And when you think of Freddie Reed, think of hiring halls."

Brow furrowed, he stared hard at the floor for a moment. "There's one thing more before you go," he said, looking squarely at the men. "You hear all sorts of stories about me, so I want you to know how much I'm getting out of this myself. Well, I don't live at the Ritz. Tonight, and every night, I sleep over at the Sailors' Home—thirty-five cents for a cot. And if there's anyone here who can say that I've asked for one single cent in contribution, let him step up and tell me so. All right. That's all."

The meeting was over. A couple of the men shuffled over to the bar for a drink, others tramped out of the speakeasy, mulling over what Freddie had been telling them. The fellow with the small sharp eyes was leaving too. Jan looked after him, puzzled. Now, what was the matter with that guy? Something freakish. What was it?

"Come on," Tony said. "Let's scram. It's getting late."

They went outside. The setting sun hung above Jersey like a red ball.

Jan racked his brain. That guy? . . .

Then he stopped short. "I got it!" he cried.

"Got what?" Tony said.

"That guy in the speakeasy—the one who came in while Freddie was talking. Didn't you notice anything?"

"Notice what?"

"Anything queer?"

"Can't say I did. I didn't like his mug, but . . ."

"You think he's a longshoreman?"

"Sure."

"No. I thought there was something funny about him all along in there, but I couldn't figure out just what. Now I know. Did you see his hook? On what side do you carry yours?"

"The left, of course."

"Did you ever see one of us stick his hook on the right?"

"Well, no . . ."

"This guy did. And it looked phony. Plenty, I tell you. He is no longshoreman."

Tony was startled. "You got something there!" he said, and whistled. "Yep, now when I think of it, he did look fishy, didn't he?"

YOU'RE LATE. I'VE BEEN WORRIED," KAREN SAID, AS JAN came inside the door. She had put on an apron, and from the kitchen drifted a good odor of food.

"Yes, we had a meeting."

One thing puzzled him. Not by a single word had she referred to that other night. Yet to him it was a most painful memory.

Karen showed no sign of being troubled. The first few days she had seemed afraid he would leave her. But then she apparently forgot about what had happened.

Her attitude calmed his anxiety. He had feared she would turn away from him. Now he was comforted, but also perplexed.

Yet nothing could shake his love for her. After the anxiety of that night had died down she was again to him the enchanting woman she had been from the first. She attracted him in mysterious ways, and roused in him both passion and tenderness.

And because he loved her he learned to understand her, and found the key to obscurities in her nature which would baffle other people. Boredom was her great enemy. A thing or a

person would hold her interest while still novel. But soon her attention waned, and she drooped and grew bored.

She needed diversion. He must think of ways to amuse her if he ever hoped to see her well. And a suggestion for some good fun came to him one day while he worked with his gang on a river barge and saw a white excursion boat come sailing up the Hudson, flags and pennants flying, and crowds of passengers sunning themselves on the decks.

He told Karen about it in the evening. "Let's go next Sunday. A boat trip will do you good."

She was in one of her jittery moods and did not like the proposition. Besides, she disliked the river, and what she didn't like she must hate. Nothing in between for her. "I'm sick and tired of the river," she said. "And I should think you'd get enough of it yourself all week."

"Do you good," he persisted. "You need a little sunshine."

"Oh, what good is the sun? Ruins your complexion, that's all."

"There's dancing aboard ship," he said slyly.

"Dancing! . . . I don't believe it."

"It's true. They got a nice band."

She allowed herself to be persuaded by degrees, and once she had made up her mind to go she entered into the undertaking with enthusiasm. She bought herself a large red sun hat, as well as a flowery chiffon dress designed to make the most indifferent bystander take notice. And on the next Sunday morning Jan helped her pack a lunch basket to take along on the trip.

They were almost ready to start when she decided she must go to a beauty shop to have her hair set.

"But they aren't open on Sundays," Jan protested.

"Yes, they are. I know a place next block. My hair is a mess."

"It looks grand to me," he said, looking at her naturally curly blonde hair. "And we've no time. All the tickets will be sold, and then we can't go."

"Tickets sold! Hm-hm . . ." It would be too bad if they should miss the trip now after she had bought herself both dress and hat. "I'll tell you," she said. "You go ahead and buy the tickets, and wait for me. It won't take me long. I'll meet you there."

His answer was a resigned shrug. "If you must, you must. All right, then. I'll be waiting for you at the gangplank."

So he set out for the boat. Reaching the Hudson River Day Line pier he bought the tickets. But it seemed as if he and Karen would miss the boat after all. He stood with lunch basket in hand on ship's deck, watching while the noisy passengers streamed across the gangplank—factory workers and white collar folk, families with children, the young and the old, some laughingly arm in arm.

While he waited he saw a flashy couple walking aboard, the man in his middle forties, the woman somewhat younger. The man was a big pallid fellow in a checkered suit and with a sparkling diamond pin stuck in his tie. The woman was only half his size, a frowsy little thing on wobbly heels, and her hair dyed blonde.

The man's face seemed familiar. Jan wondered where he had seen him. But the beefy-cheeked slugger was not an uncommon type, for such mugs were constantly in the papers during these feverish years.

The pair strutted across the gangplank as though boarding a private yacht of their own, the man with a bold grimness about him that suggested he had little patience with scruples of any kind. A girl behind Jan whispered an awed comment to her boy friend. "Look, Bill. Nice company we're in."

"Yeah," said Bill. "Ain't hard to tell how that guy makes his dough."

"He scares me."

"Aw, come on. He won't bother *us*."

"You're sure?"

"Listen, Mary. You ain't a big shot in the bootlegging racket, are you?"

"No, Bill." Her voice sank to a murmur as the pallid bruiser elbowed his way among the passengers, his pseudo-blonde tripping behind.

"Don't stare at him," said Bill. "And don't look at his gal either. They won't like it."

"All right. I'll try not to."

The last of the passengers were hurrying aboard now, but Jan was still looking for Karen. Afraid she would be left behind he stepped ashore again and stood craning his neck for her, one foot on the gangplank, his other foot on the dock.

"Say, buddy. Are ya comin' or no?" said one of the seamen crabbily.

"I'm waiting for someone. My wife."

"She better hurry. Half a minute more, then off we go. Wife or no wife."

The seconds flew, yet no Karen appeared. Jan was getting nervous. Karen always made trouble.

"Time's up," said the tar. "Got to pull out."

"She isn't here!" Jan groaned.

"Ya don't hafta tell me. Get off that plank. Can't keep the whole ship waiting for your wife."

Stepping ashore Jan watched while the dock crew prepared to pull in the gangplank. The ship's whistle blew. Once more he desperately craned his neck, hoping against hope that Karen would come. And now he saw her. "There she is!" he cried, pointing down the aisle between the ticket booths where a slim white figure came tearing along.

"Ho! Ho!" she called. "Wait! Here I am!"

The tar stared at the dazzling woman who swept up to them across the dock. And if he had planned to give Jan's wife a piece of his mind, he showed no sign of it now as Karen fluttered past him, a disarming smile under her large red hat. His

hand flew to his cap. "How-d'ye-do," he grinned. "Ye almost missed it, lady. Hope ye'll have a real nice trip."

"Thanks," she twittered, colorful and pretty, and stared at by every passenger at the rail as she tripped across the gang-plank with the still highly flustered Jan in her wake.



WHILE THE BOAT GLIDED SLOWLY FROM THE PIER JAN and Karen pushed through the crowds and climbed the companionway to the top deck. Even here all seats were taken, but on the approach of imperious Karen room was somehow made.

Karen was well aware of the furor she created, and enjoyed it immensely. Jan watched her tenderly as she tilted her red hat coquettishly against the sun. Only yesterday she had drooped wearily, but now she blossomed out in the sunshine of the passengers' admiration—or perhaps the women's green-eyed envy. It touched him that a boat trip and a little outside attention could make her so happy. He vowed he would provide some diversion for her each week.

Whistle growling, the boat swung into the fairway. On starboard hostile midtown skyscrapers loomed up in the morning mist as if frowning upon the fragile pleasure boat down below them in the stream.

Leaning on the rail Jan watched the slips of the great liners berthing above Forty-second Street. The mighty *Leviathan* was resting in its slip while taking on mail and passengers for a forthcoming voyage to Southampton, Africa and West Asia. One by one the other slips fell astern: United American Line,

Transatlantic Terminal, Italian American. And looking across the morning-gray waters off the Jersey shore he saw slips with clumsy barges and car floats. A battered tramp was moored at one of the piers of Union Dry Dock & Repair Co., the old hulk seeming to need a major operation before being able to scamper off to sea again. Inland, behind masts and spars, rose the Weehawken heights dotted with cottages.

Screaming gulls wheeled in the air. Foam hissed at the bows. On board ship the passengers formed small coteries, and were chatting, jesting and getting acquainted, the girls fussing with their freshly marceled hair and darting secret glances at a crowd of loud boys who, of course, were not playing to any galleries. And who were sitting there, almost in front of Jan, but Bill and his girl, with their arms blissfully around each other—a sign that the big fellow with the diamond pin was nowhere near to frighten little Mary.

And now the orchestra struck up *Tea for Two* on the lower deck. "Come on, let's dance!" Karen cried, pulling Jan by the coat sleeve. The wind flapped her dress about her slim legs, and she had trouble with her hat. But, oh, this was fun! The passengers smiled.

Jan felt uncomfortable with all this attention as he edged his way among the deck chairs. Blending with the throbbing of the engines came the syncopated music from below and the singing of the young folk:

### *Tea for Two . . .*

The dancing was in full swing when they reached the second deck. Jan wished the band had been playing the *Blue Danube* or some other waltz, but he bravely put his arm around Karen's waist and voyaged out among the merry couples who jogged, elbowed and gyrated, while a cool wind blew in through the open side ports. Out there the river sped by in flashes of blue and glittering sunlight and salt foam.

Karen beamed. She looked so pretty today, and seemed so

sweet and affectionate that it made Jan feel good deep down in his heart. Yet how insecure this happiness! When the excursion was over, the music had fallen silent and the crowds dispersed—how much would be left of Karen's joy?

When they came up on sun deck again the boat had reached the Palisades. During all his years on the waterfront Jan had never been this far up the river. For although the Port of New York theoretically extends north as far as Tarrytown, here were no docks, and no ships loading and handling freight. Only the river and its wooded shores, and occasionally an old boat house for pleasure craft. He looked in wonder at the towering Palisades cliffs where trees and underbrush somehow managed to cling to the precipice, light green and dark alternating with purple shadows and brilliant sunlight.

"It's more gorgeous than the hanging gardens of Babylon!" exclaimed a voluble young man, perhaps a student, who had a map of the river in his hand. "Molten lava formed those rocks," he added, speaking to a small group of passengers, but mostly addressing himself to Karen.

And the river itself? The student told how it had been wearing down the rocks as the years rolled on by the millions; how the sea once covered the land, and how glaciers moved across it.

But now this little pleasure boat chugged up the ancient river with a boatload of city folk out for a frolic. At Inwood the student told Karen how the hill used to be a favorite haunt of the Manhattan Indians. They named the river the *Mai-kan-e-tuk*—River of Ebb and Flow, and the Spuyten Duyvil Creek was called *Shorakapkok*. Here they lived in peace, except when occasionally raided by warlike Mohawks. Here they hunted and fished and caught oysters which they ate in the rock caves on the sheltered east side of the hill, the bleached oyster shells still littering the ground.

Jan wondered how much Karen listened to of all this. He

couldn't believe she was as interested in Indians as she assured the young man. But she was having a grand time with so much attention from right and left.

Soon the boat entered sunlit Tappan Zee, and Jan felt like a man of leisure, drowsing in his deck chair. As the boat passed Kingsland Point he saw little Mary give a start. "Bill," she whispered, her hazel eyes gazing toward the starboard side. "Look who's there!"

Turning his head Jan saw the big pallid fellow and his blowsy blonde standing off by the rail, staring intently toward the east shore. Jan did not know what they were looking at, but he had a good opportunity to watch the pair. The sun flashed on the diamond pin stuck in the man's tie. The dame was a skimpy and heavily powdered little thing with short skirts and high heels.

Now the young student called Karen's attention to the shore. "And there," he said, pointing to a group of severe buildings which became visible ahead, "there is Sing Sing."

The big fellow over by the rail jogged his blonde. She glanced up with a timid and meaningful smirk. The pair stared at the prison until the boat reached Croton Bay and altered its course northwest so that it might pass the pineclad point which here juts out in the river like a dagger aimed at the ship.

Sing Sing prison disappeared sternward. Taking the blonde by the arm "Diamond Jim," as Jan dubbed him, left the rail and descended to the lower deck where the orchestra was again playing *Tea for Two*.

Karen wanted to go down and dance once more. She hummed the tune everyone else was singing, even little Mary, now again peaceful in Bill's arms. The student pleaded with her to wait on deck a while longer. "The band will play all day," he said. "But soon we'll come to something I wouldn't want you to miss for anything."

So Karen stayed and allowed the eager young man to tell

her what more he knew of the river up here. He pointed to a mountain peak, heroic against the unclouded sky. "Look," he said proudly as if it were a creation of his own. "That's High Tor."

And then, as the Hudson entered upon a cramped and tortuous course, he launched into another enthusiastic explanation. These were the Highlands. The old Appalachians. A thousand million years old. In the dim past all this land was covered with red clay. Many long rivers were flowing toward the sea, and one of them was the young Hudson. Songbirds filled the air with their warblings, but man had not yet evolved. And the river swirled about, and through immeasurable time it wore down the rocks until at last this narrow Highland passage was cleared. Then there were upheavals in the earth. The ocean rolled over the land, and the river submerged so that the Hudson is no longer a river but a salt water estuary ebbing and flowing with the pulse beats of the sea.

"Uhuh!" Karen said, glancing indifferently at the winding river passage among rugged mountains washed by summer sunshine—mountains silent to her of the long struggle they had waged with this subdued river in ages past. "Uhuh."

And then the young man pointed out scenes of historic interest. There was Treason Hill where Arnold met Major André. And over there the spot where Hudson's *Half Moon* dropped anchor.

But now a seaman appeared on deck and shouted a warning to the passengers, announcing that within a few minutes the boat would reach Indian Point. Soon the ship passed the limestone quarry. Right beyond that was the landing, and the ship stopped to take off those of the excursionists who were to spend the day here. Watching the passengers disembark Jan saw Diamond Jim and his blonde go ashore with the other folk. He nudged Karen. "Look at that guy."

"Who? . . ." She craned her neck.

"That guy and his dame there. Well, you're too late. They just stepped behind those trees."

The boat's whistle blew a signal, and the machinery started thumping again. Turning sharply to the port side the ship rounded a jutting piece of shore which the student said was named after the famous pirate Kidd who is supposed to have buried his treasure there. Towering above the shore rose the mighty dome of Dunderberg. A little further upstream was Bear Mountain landing, where Jan and Karen were to get off.

The student regretted that Karen would go ashore here. "I had hoped you'd come further up the river," he said. "There are so many interesting things I wanted to show you."

Well, it couldn't be helped. Jan's tickets took them only to Bear Mountain. He smiled as the nice young student took farewell of Karen, for he knew his love and her capricious moods. She was bored now, bored with the enthusiastic student, bored with river scenery and sites of historic interest. After she looked at one mountain and exclaimed over it, a second mountain—even Dunderberg—could not excite her much. She had looked at half a dozen big rocks so far on this trip. And here this young man wanted her to be interested in still more of them. She seemed rather cool as she said good-bye to him and thanked him for his great kindness during the trip.

SO THE PICNIC DIDN'T COME OFF AS WELL AS JAN HAD hoped. When the first excitement of the journey was over Karen began to be restless. She cared not for nature and did not know the language of green woods, shady lake, or warm good sunshine. Not even the great Bear Mountain wakened a response in her.

Jan was disappointed. For to him this outing was a marvelous experience. These woods and this river, and those high mountains against the sky, they called up memories of his boyhood in distant Bohemia. He felt refreshed by being away from the slummy Village streets, and stretched himself out on his back in a shaded spot among the trees, his hands under his neck. He would like to make this trip up the river very soon again.

But it would be wrong to say that the scenery left Karen entirely unmoved. Her eyes swept the Manito mountain range, wrapped in a bluish-gray sun haze. "Looks like Norway," she said with a sigh. Then she lapsed into a moody reverie, her gaze turning inward while she looked back on her past life, to events that had taken place many years before she met Jan.

And he on his part thinking, not of the past, but of the present and the future. For his coming here helped him to get a better perspective of Karen and himself. Lying on the fragrant grass he thought of their home on the outskirts of

the Village, and of his work at the docks. And he knew again that matters could not continue as they were. This hectic life was not for him, and not good for Karen. If they could only have a place on the waterfront!

He thought of many things. Was it not significant that this grand river scenery should remind Karen of her earlier days. Such then were her origins. She had spent her childhood near the sea and the great mountains of Norway. She had strayed far from them, but is there not hidden in every soul a secret love for that which made up our beginnings? And could not the embers of that love be kindled once more?

He watched her secretly, watched her brooding eyes, gray now, as she sat with her face turned to the mountain range. He knew! He knew! Bitter memories haunted her. And he knew that she was better able to forget amidst the glitter of city life, noisy crowds, and jazz music of the cafés.

It was so quiet and peaceful here among the trees, and so restful to look at that wooded mountain. It had might and majesty. And an immense silence soothing to the soul.

A cool breeze wafted in from the river and rustled the leaves above him. How could he bring Karen to love the outdoors, the sunshine, trees, green grass, and the river? How could her desire for shallow pleasures be satisfied? For it was perhaps necessary that this thirst should be quenched before she would really belong to him.

He didn't know. He wondered. And again he watched her, while pretending his eyes were closed—her slim white figure as she sat leaning back against the tree, one leg under her, the other beautiful leg stretched out, and a melancholy expression on her face. He felt such tenderness for her, and such an urge to rise and draw her to him and speak words of love to her. But he resisted the temptation. It might be that in this mood she would ward him off and again prove to him that they had not yet come closely enough together. And he feared that evidence.



AFTER LUNCH THEY ROAMED THE PICNIC GROUNDS AND followed a trail among the trees. At Highland Lake Jan rented a rowboat, but as Karen didn't care for the trip they soon returned to shore.

"Why don't we go home?" she said. "I'm tired of this place."

"We can't. The boat doesn't leave until five-thirty."

"Oh, that's awful! I'm bored to death."

"I know. But we got to make the best of things. Look, there's an inn. Let's go inside and cool off."

They spent an hour at the inn, then took another stroll in the woods. And once more looking up at the mass of Bear Mountain, Jan noticed a road blasted in the side of the rock—for motor buses carrying sight-seeing tourists. It angered him to see a noble mountain gashed that way. He said so to Karen, but she was indifferent. She wanted to go home.

And so at snail's pace the hours crept on toward evening. Finally the excursionists began streaming back to the landing point, and Jan and Karen joined them, she irritable to stand among the picnic-weary people, packed like sardines and pushing each other and elbowing in a tiresome wait for the boat.

Karen was near tears with impatience when a whistle hooted up in the river bend. Craning her neck she saw the white steamer hove into view. Soon it tied up at the dock, and now followed a mad scramble for deck chairs. But before the passengers were well seated, the boat pushed out again. The sun was on its decline. Behind the mountains the heavens were afire.

The ship passed beneath massive Dunderberg. Ahead, on the port side, was Indian Point. There they would stop for another load of passengers, and standing by the rail Jan saw a large crowd waiting with lunch baskets in hand. The boat's whistle blew. In another few minutes the ship nosed alongside the landing place, and the throngs began to stream up the gangplank.

And who was coming there if not pallid Diamond Jim and his dame! The big fellow smoked a cigar, and now with the smoke and looking at him full face Jan thought he recognized the beefy-cheeked brute. One of the guys sitting in a corner of Al's speakeasy that evening when Tony and he came in for a drink. If not the same man, he certainly looked a lot like him.

Having boarded the ship, Diamond Jim sauntered off toward midship in search of two deck chairs. The rest of the passengers came aboard, and the boat started off on its final homeward stretch.

Slumped in a chair Jan watched the shore gliding by. He turned to Karen. "How do you feel now?" he said.

"All right." She smiled guiltily, as if admitting she had been a spoil-sport. "Be glad to get home. Won't you?"

"Sure . . ." What was that she just said? Glad to be going home! . . . Sounded good to him. And was it not wonderful to sit at her side while the ship churned its way down the stream!

The boat made a sharp turn at Stony Point. Presently Jan saw Diamond Jim and his blonde come slowly toward the bows, glancing to right and left as if still trying to find a suit-

able place to sit. They were coming nearer. And now, as the woman happened to look at Karen, she stared at her with wide-open eyes. She pulled Diamond Jim by the coat-sleeve and whispered something, he in turn eying Karen in great surprise.

Jan tensed. What was this? . . . Here they came, Jim and his blonde, heading straight for Karen's chair, Diamond Jim chewing his black cigar, the blonde with a big smile on her crudely painted face.

Karen did not see them until they were directly at her side. An astonished cry escaped her. "Kelly!" she gasped. "Lizzie! . . ."

"Hey, kid," said Kelly, with a growl meant to be affectionate. "Where the hell have you been keepin' yourself all this time?"

"Karen, darlin'!" Lizzie shrilled, and fell on her neck. "Gee, I'm sure happy to see you! An' ain't you lookin' dandy! Gee, and what a get-up! You look like a million dollars, and I ain't flattering you."

Jan had risen to his feet as the pair barged down on Karen. Drawing back a step to the port rail he watched the noisy greeting in dismay, painfully aware of the critical glances the other passengers bestowed on Karen and her two incredible friends.

Kelly, in his checkered suit and diamond pin, hovered above Karen with his great bulk which gave him a cruel and sensuous aspect. And to the casual eye there was also his imperturbable poise. Yet Jan noticed his trigger-like alertness. The man was constantly observing people out of the corners of his small, heavy-lidded eyes.

The group moved closer to the rail to prevent the others from overhearing what was said. "Where you been?" Kelly muttered to Karen. "What you mean droppin' out like that?"

"Where have you been?" she countered, excitement burning her cheeks. "I tried to look you up, but no one knew where you'd gone."

Kelly flicked an eye around at the other passengers who took a sudden interest in the shore. "*Was away*," he said in meaningful tones.

"Away?" Her eyes narrowing, she met his hard gaze. Lizzie tittered nervously at his side.

"Away . . . on a little vacation," he added, with the ghost of a sardonic smile.

"I see . . ." It seemed to the miserable Jan as if Kelly had a veiled fascination for Karen. His cruel power exerted a spell over her. Jan was dumbfounded at this sudden development. Who were these people? This tough Kelly? This simpering Lizzie?

And while he asked himself these questions the ship passed daggerlike Croton Point. When the craft had changed its course and swung south a group of merry youngsters on the starboard side began to jostle each other and crane their necks to get a better view of the shore. "There it is!" one fellow yelled happily. "Sing Sing, boys. Better be good." They all laughed.

Lizzie's titter lay glazed on her crimson lips, and she timidly raised her awed eyes to Kelly. But his pallid face betrayed no emotion. He might not have heard. Still considering Karen he nodded almost imperceptibly. "Away on a little vacation."

She looked at him silently, then turned inquiringly to Lizzie. And the little bleached blonde understood her unspoken question. "Me too," she grunted, embarrassed, with a scared peep at Kelly, as if to apologize in case she talked out of turn. "For a rest," she added, giggling and afraid.

"Yeah, we both had a rest," said Kelly, gazing tight-lipped at Sing Sing Prison which disappeared among the woods of the river shore.

Then he spoke to Karen: "Kid, I want to hear about you. Why don't you come down on the lower deck an' we can hop a dance?"

"Why not. But . . . wait a minute." She looked around for Jan, and saw him standing by the rail, with a countenance like thunder. Measuring him with a quick from top-to-toe glance she smiled, satisfied—even proud—and turned to her re-discovered friends. "This is Jan," she said. "My husband," she added quickly, with an equally quick side-glance at Lizzie.

Little Lizzie gave a start. She had obviously not until now realized that Jan was with Karen, for he had withdrawn so quietly that he had seemed just another passenger. Even Kelly was thrown off his guard.

But recovering from her surprise Lizzie greeted Jan with effusive friendliness. "How-d'-do," she smirked, her bob a cross between a jerky bow and a curtsy. "Glad to know ye, I'm sure."

"How are you?" said Jan, with no change of his dark expression.

"And this is Kelly," Karen said, thrilling to the excitement she created, and aware that she was the center of great attention. And much to Jan's amazement he saw that she took a pride in her friend Kelly now as she introduced him.

Kelly said nothing. He and Jan stared at each other for a second, but neither one so much as blinked in mutual greeting.

"Come on," Karen cried. "Kelly, come on. Let's dance. Jan won't mind."

From lower deck came the muffled strains of music, accompanied by the thumping of engines. It was *Tea for Two* again, the rage at the moment, and from bow to stern the words were hummed and sung.

Kelly shot a triumphant look at Jan, then with Karen at his side he strode off among the passengers to the companionway midships.

Jan's hand gripped the rail. He needed all his self-control to keep from following Kelly. He felt a murderous desire to smash the brute's jaw. He was sick at heart, and furious. And he feared for Karen's safety. Standing by the rail in the river

twilight he felt that she was in greater danger than she had ever been since the day he met her. It sickened him to think of Kelly putting his fat hand on her as they danced.

Someone touched his arm. And there was Lizzie, a simpering smile on her painted monkey face. "Come an' sit down," she said soothingly. "Let's have a talk while they're down there. I know how you feel."

He was about to ask her to go to hell, but looking into her overpowdered face he held back the harsh words. Her eyes were red-rimmed and tired, yet with a warm light in them. "Come on now," she coaxed him. "You're Karen's husband, ain't you? Well, then, by golly, you're my good friend."

He sat down with her, while round about them the excursionists were singing in tune to the orchestra. The river was bathed in beauty. The flaming sun had just set behind the western mountains and left a trail of glory behind, the sky pale gold and blue, the water shimmering purple, with black shadows haunting the shore.

Lizzie wrapped her coat around her narrow shoulders. She coughed and pounded her breast.

"Tell me," said Jan. "Are you Kelly's wife?"

"Lordy, no," she sighed wistfully. "What wouldn't I give to be married to a man like that! No, I ain't. He's got a wife, but . . . well, she doesn't understand him, see what I mean? They don't get along."

She interrupted herself to peer cautiously around in the dusk. "No, I ain't his wife," she resumed, leaning forward to make herself heard above the singing and the noise. "I am . . . well . . . just his friend."

"I see."

"Sure. I'm his friend. I kind of understand Kelly, you see. Now, a man's got to have a woman that understands him, ain't that right?"

"Ye-es."

A soft note came into Lizzie's voice, and she gazed dreamily

at the opposite shore which rushed past them in the half-dark. "He's got big ideas, Kelly has. Things don't pan out for him sometimes, but I stand by him, I do. And he appreciates it. So he takes me out an' gives me a good time. Lordy, an' am I proud to be seen with him!"

Jan cleared his throat. A pause followed during which Lizzie sat with a fond smile on her painted face, thinking of Kelly, no doubt. Then she leaned toward Jan. "D'you know what he said to me the other day?" she whispered as if bursting to share a secret. "He says to me: Lizzie, if only I got you to believe in me, I'll make out. Those were his own words. All I need, he says, is one friend. Just one. You stand by me, Lizzie, an' I can take it an' I can dish it out.—Now, ain't that wonderful?"

"It is . . . it sure is."

Lizzie's eyes shone. "He's a great man," she murmured. "He's got big idears. Now I won't say we don't have a scrap sometimes," she chuckled. "We have, an' he lams me around plenty. But he's got his troubles, and he's a bit jumpy. Can you blame 'im?"

"Well, I guess . . . maybe not . . ." His eyes sought the companionway where Karen and Kelly had disappeared ten minutes ago. The music kept playing with only short intervals.

"Yes, let's talk about Karen now," said Lizzie, searching his face. "Tell me, dearie, you love her?"

"Sure, I do," he answered bitterly.

"That's all I want to know," she said and sank back in the chair again. "You treat Karen right, and you've got a friend in old Lizzie. I'm one who stands by my friends. Now Karen, she's a dear. And ain't she somethin' to knock your eye out!"

"She's beautiful," he said with emotion.

"She is," Lizzie echoed him. "She's beautiful, and she's a great one for fun. She was always like that. I remember years ago, just after she came here from Norway. Lordy, she was

pretty! An' we had a grand time! Dancing and makin' whoopee. Them were the days."

Fresh bitterness welling up within him, Jan hunched forward on the chair as if ready to jump to his feet and make for the companionway.

Lizzie stretched out a soothing hand. "Listen, dear. Don't be upset, an' don't worry. Kelly likes his dames hot, see what I mean?" She giggled, embarrassed. "Y'know—Karen ain't that kind. The Lord gave it all to her in looks, an' he gave her plenty. Now, Kelly appreciates a pretty woman. I know him. He used to take Karen out to show off, an' they'd paint the town red."

Jan was too upset and tormented to get the full import of what Lizzie was telling him. His troubled eyes were on the companionway. He felt sick with worry about Karen. Worried and jealous so that he could not think straight.

It seemed to him that Karen had been gone for nearly an hour when he spied Kelly's sinister bulk approaching in the dusk among the passengers lolling in their chairs. Behind Kelly he saw Karen's slim form, and they came and took their seats, Kelly placing himself with his broad back to Jan. Karen fluttered with excitement, and now Kelly engaged her and Lizzie in a whispered conversation which excluded Jan completely. But seeing his discomfiture Lizzie turned to him and made a comment about the scenery. "Ain't that pretty," she said, nodding at the shore. The boat was passing Tarrytown where lights gleamed in the cottage windows.

"Yes . . ." He threw a distracted glance across the water. He tried not to betray his anger, but knew well enough that Kelly turned his back to him on purpose, and kept whispering ceaselessly to Karen for no other purpose than to aggravate him. He pretended not to notice, but was afraid he would explode any moment.



"Look at that moon," Lizzie cooed as the large red disc slowly rose above the dark hills in the east.

"Yes, yes . . ." And now with Kelly in the picture, what would happen? His eyes sought Karen's white figure reclining in the chair. How wonderful it would have been to sit with her alone in this dusk while the boat was nearing home, sit quietly and still after a long day in the open. Why should that bastard Kelly have to come and spoil things? Why? Oh, God, why?

The boat glided swiftly down the stream. On starboard rose the black rock wall of the Palisades, on the port side scattered lights gleamed from the small towns on the shore—Hastings, Ludlow, Riverdale.

Soon they passed the tiny lighthouse at Jeffries Hook, a glowing ruby light in the summer dusk, and then Edgewater and Guttenberg where old timber piers dream in the tide. And now since the black Palisades were left behind, more frequent became the lights on both shores, soon to grow into clusters, and then interminable rows like bright strings of pearls down along the river edge, and glowing lamps high on the Weehawken heights, with other lights on the Manhattan shore, great sinuous sweeps and illuminated roadways, all leading downstream, all pointing to that blaze of light which flared upon the very heavens—the metropolis at the river's end.

The ship chugged along with its homeward-bound passengers. Ahead, under the pale stars, two lighted ferries floated in nocturnal mystery, somberly, slowly, one of them leaving the shadows of the Jersey shore, the other leaving Manhattan, and gliding with lights mirrored fantastically in the black water until meeting in midstream, then passing each other gravely, and continuing their gentle progress, unhurried, meditative and aloof.

The pleasure boat churned on between banks which were like bright arrows speeding to a meeting point far ahead in the dark. And soon the barbaric splendor of New York was

before the passengers, with illuminated towers brushing the sky, dim shapes rising behind the river mist, beacons blazing, millions of lights and arresting flares bursting upon the night.

Karen gazed in rapt attention at the grand spectacle. Lizzie seemed awed. Kelly sat bent forward, he too looking intently at the majesty of this mighty city of staggering wealth and bleak poverty, of high achievement, beauty and power, blasted dreams, iniquity and vice—this world metropolis where the towers of God and Mammon soar equally high.

Jan turned to Karen. She had taken off her hat, and her face was pale in the moonlight, chiseled, carved, fascinating.

He looked at Kelly who sat hunched and motionless, staring at this blaze of lights that was New York.

SOON THE BOAT REACHED FORTY-SECOND STREET WHERE the passengers disembarked. And Kelly pulled Karen aside, whispering to her, while she nodded eagerly as if promising something he asked for.

Then goodbye, and Jan hailing a taxi to be spared facing the subway crowd in his despondent mood. Yet knowing all the time, as the taxi bounced along, that he must master himself and not let Karen suspect his feeling of outrage.

When they arrived home he assumed a pleasant air. "Well, it's been a nice trip," he said.

"Glad you enjoyed yourself," she retorted, arching her brows. "I didn't think you did."

"Why? . . ."

"Oh, that long face of yours."

"No, no. I was just . . ."

"Never mind," she turned on him savagely. "You didn't like my friends. That's where the shoe pinched."

"Now listen, don't let's fight. Have I said a word against them?"

She flung her hat on the bed. "You didn't have to say anything. Anyone could see what you thought. My friends weren't good enough for you. The trouble with you is you're so damn superior."

"Karen, don't let us fight."

"Aw, hell, a lot I care! You drive me crazy. You're so damn good, that's the trouble with you. You make me feel I'm nothing but a worthless bitch."

"Do I? . . ." He stared at her, amazed. "Do I really make you feel like that?"

"I'm telling you," she hissed at him. "I've felt like that ever since I met you, almost. You make me feel cheap. You're always so high-minded. God Almighty, I can't stand it! I want to be with people who make me feel that . . . that I'm not . . . so bad."

"I never claimed you were bad," he said quietly. "And I never had the thought. I only saw the very best in you."

She threw him a tortured look. Her bosom heaved stormily.

"I never thought anything bad about you," he repeated. "And you say I feel superior! You're crazy. I never felt half good enough for you, and that's God's honest truth."

Her fury died down. And her expression showed that she regretted her cruel words. But her pride forbade her to admit it.

"I'm sorry if I made you feel bad in any way," he continued. "I'm sure I didn't mean to. All I want is that we should get along together."

Picking up her hat she stepped to the closet. As she passed him, he took her hand. "Come on. We had such a nice day."

She turned away, ashamed. A little later she went into the kitchen and busied herself. "Jan, want to eat?" she called. "I've made supper."

"Sure thing," he said, and joined her. He glanced at the table spread with food. "Look at that! Kid, and do I have an appetite."

They sat down. And while they ate he talked about the river journey, Bear Mountain, and all they had seen that day. He deceived her completely. She didn't realize how worried he was.

ANOTHER MONDAY MORNING WITH LONGSHOREMEN standing about in crowds near the dock gates. The flag was up. A ship expected at the pier any minute. Was that her whistle blowing far downstream—a hoarse call rolling over the raucous waterfront?

The Stevedore came out and blew his signal, and the men shaped up. "Sailor gangs only!" he roared, picking a handful of men. The sailor gangs would be on the pier to meet the ship and help moor her.

"Be back at one o'clock," the Stevedore cried to the waiting men, while the hired gangs scampered through the gates. "One o'clock!" he yelled, with a wave of his hand.

The bull line broke up, and the men scattered, some of them again forming little groups among the piles of cargo outside the gates, while others drifted off to gather on the street corners or in front of the ship chandleries, there to talk and kill time until noon.

From the river came another loud bellowing. "Here she is," said Cliff, a husky young negro standing with a gang of other longshoremen in the shadow of a warehouse canopy. And now Jan, too, joined the crowd, and also old Pat Mulligan. Cliff was telling them of his remarkable weekend adventures in

Harlem. He and his buddy had gotten into a scrap in a hotspot up there. But as Cliff boasted powerful means for handling himself he did pretty well in the fracas, and this little scratch on his chin represented all the blood his enemies drew from him. His buddy, however, considered it best to go home and get a chunk of raw meat for his swollen eye. Cliff went along with him. And, lo! It turned out that his buddy had a real beauty for a sister, a tall brown-skinned gal. So one thing leading to another—here Cliff had a red-hot date for Wednesday night. “Ah’m tellin’ yuh, boys,” he grinned. “Some baby, that gal!”

At one o’clock the men shaped up again, and the Stevedore picked a full crew. About a hundred men were turned back, among them old Humpy. Jan caught a glimpse of him, staring desperately at the indifferent Stevedore, then shuffling off.

The hired fellows were glad to get into the shadow of the pier shed, for the hot summer season had come, with a blazing sun that drew streams of sweat from both man and beast. The *Manahawskin* was waiting at the pier. And the unloading started at once with a draft of Brazilian coffee swinging ashore at the end of a taut wire fall.

“Hurry up!” the Stevedore shouted, sweat washing down his face. “For Christ’s sake, get a move on you!”

Now a gang foreman came tearing along. He wanted help for a rush job over by the gates, and after a brief skirmish with another foreman he called a few fellows who happened to be near at hand. They were Jan, Tony and Cliff. “Listen, you guys. A truckful of barrels just pulled up over there. Come on and get ’em out of the way. Quick.”

The three men hurried to the gates, the boss ahead to give the truck driver orders how to unload with greatest possible speed. There was not much traffic in the shed at the moment, so the driver backed his truck across the driveway. The scheme was to let the empty barrels roll down a plank and hit a con-

crete wall a few yards away, where they would be stopped. Cliff would steer the barrels down the plank; Tony and Jan would roll them off into a corner of the shed.

The arrangement worked well, and the barrels spun off the truck with fine speed, Cliff handling them so expertly that they fairly flew into the waiting hands of Tony and Jan. "Whoopee! Here they come. Boy, oh, boy!"

Jan kidded Cliff about his date. "Hear we're going to work overtime Wednesday night," he said to Tony in a loud voice. "We'll work all night, says the boss."

Cliff flashed his teeth. Laughing, he spun a barrel down the plank. And *bump!* it struck the concrete wall. "Nothin' doin'," he chuckled. "Not me. Cliff gotta red-hot date."

A rumble and a *bump*. Jan and Tony rolled the barrels away. They came back. "Bet she's bow-legged," said Jan.

Tony snickered. "Yeah, sure. What d'you expect?"

A rumble down the plank. And *bump!* against the wall. "No, suh!" Cliff laughed a belly-laugh. "She's got . . . oh, boy, Ah'm tellin' yuh. She's got somethin'! She's a real hot date."

Jan wiped the sweat from his face. "Tony," he said, "I bet you he's taking her to one of those ten-cent movies, the poor stiff."

"No, suh. Ah'm goin' to take that baby to a real swell show."

"The hell you are."

"Ah'm tellin' yuh. Come Wednesday Ah'm goin' to make whoopee." He spun the barrels down the plank. And with a *bump* they hit the concrete wall.

Jan rolled away another barrel. He glanced at a three-horse team waiting for the passage to be cleared. The driver was impatiently cracking his whip. The horses pawed at the ground.

A moment later he was back again, catching his barrel straight from the plank to save a split second of time. "Tony," he said. "Cliff is a liar. He's got no gal. What do you think?"

"Sure, Ah got. She's real hot stuff. She'll be there. Oh, boy, she'll be there come Wednesday night."

"The hell she will. You're just fooling yourself."

"No, suh. Ah's gotta date, all right."

*Bump.* A rumble and a *bump*.

The work was getting done in no time. And a good thing, for now several teams and drays were waiting to get past the barrel truck. Horns tooted. Drivers shouted and cursed.

"Hurry up!" cried the foreman to the sweating Cliff who stood between the truck and the concrete wall, spinning the last few barrels down the plank. "Get those goddam barrels out of the way so we can get the passage cleared. Hurry up!"

More teamsters joined the line blocked by the barrel truck. "Get out!" they shouted to the harried driver sitting with his hands on the wheel, waiting for Cliff and his two pals to be done. "Jesus, back away!"

"Pipe down, you punk! Pipe down."

"Aw, for Christ's sake! I should take gab from a pop-eyed bastard like you!"

"Step out here, an' I'll sock you one!"

"Oh, yeah!"

Their argument was drowned in the infernal noise on the pier. Hand trucks and locomobiles rumbled across the ratty cement deck. Horses whinnied. Winches chugged on ship's deck. Rolling away one of the last barrels Jan suddenly heard behind him a loud crash and a scream—a human scream of such agony that his hands grew numb on the barrel. And as he spun around his face turned gray and his legs buckled under him. He knew at once what had happened: To clear the passage and let the loud-mouthed teamster through, the harassed driver had backed his truck a bit—backed it against the concrete wall. Cliff had been there a moment ago. Now a bloody mass was spattered in all directions, radiating from the spot where the truck had smashed against the wall.



KAREN SEEMED NERVOUS AND FRETFUL WHEN JAN CAME home in the evening. He pretended not to notice, and didn't tell her about Cliff, for that would worry her. He had always been amused at her quaint conception of waterfront work, her notion being that the loading of a ship was a pleasant task chiefly consisting in a gang of men pulling at a rope and chanting: "Heave-o-hoy!" She knew nothing about the dangers attending the work, and nothing about the frequent accidents resulting either in mutilation or death.

She seemed inwardly torn tonight. Jan was on his guard, afraid that an innocent word of his might start another quarrel. He saw her step to the window as if something out there tempted her. And in the sadness of his heart he knew what she had on her mind.—Already! Already the next day!

Dusk fell early, now at the end of the summer. Karen grew more and more restless as the evening advanced. Her eyes were drawn to the lights turned on out in the Village, and she listened abstractedly to the muffled jazz music from a far-off café.

Presently she went to her room. She stayed there a short while, and when she came back she was dressed in her street

clothes. Looking at Jan defiantly, she told him she was going out.

He crumpled the newspaper in his hand. "Yes . . . sure. It's a nice evening. . . . Do you good."

Her little hands fumbled with her gloves.

Jan slowly smoothed the paper. He seemed rather pale himself, but that might be because of the electric light which fell on his angular face.

"Will do you good," he repeated. "I . . . I'm too tired to go anywhere tonight. Hope you don't mind?"

She glanced out in the lighted Village street. "I won't be gone long," she said, faltering, her defiance leaving her.

"That's all right. Guess I'll hit the hay early."

Walking to the door she put her gloved hand on the knob. She turned around to Jan who had followed her, and she seemed almost sorry. Warmth welled up in her eyes. "I'll only be a few hours," she said.

He nodded. "Have a good time."

Again she hesitated. But then she turned the knob and stepped out. Jan slowly closed the door after her, crossed to the window and stood behind the curtain, watching her emerge into the street and disappear in the dusk.

He started to pace the floor after she had gone, back and forth, restless, thinking of her slim figure walking away in the evening gloom. She was on her way now . . . to Kelly. And he knew how murders are committed by otherwise law-abiding people. They happen at a time like this. You go to the other man's house. You kill.

He paced the floor, and an icy hand reached in and closed around his heart. He glanced at the clock. Karen had been gone half an hour. Now, perhaps, she had arrived *there*. She was in *his* company.

Then something mysterious happened. His anxiety left him, and he felt calm. He felt as though in this moment Karen was

closer to him than she had ever been since that spring morning when he came upon her in the mist. His own reaction surprised him. It was contrary to all reason.

Stepping into Karen's room he stood looking at her things, her odds and ends of clothing, a pair of dainty slippers, and her dressing gown thrown across a chair. Again he was filled with anguish for her, but again that mysterious assurance drove away his doubts, and once more he felt at peace. The important thing for him now was not to lose faith.

He would wait up for Karen's return. He wouldn't show himself, or let her know that he had stayed awake for her. But he could not go to sleep until she was safely in bed.

Returning to his own room he sat down. The hours crept on. From time to time he went to the window and peered out into the street. It was midnight now.

The hour hand moved slowly. It marked one o'clock, and still no Karen. He was not able to leave the window now. He gave a start each time he glimpsed some shadowy figure out there, or heard footsteps approach.

At a quarter to three an automobile drew up outside the house. A minute passed, then the cab door opened, and Karen stepped out. He felt a sharp pang of jealousy as she stood talking to someone inside the cab, laughing and nodding her head. Then a man's hand pulled the door to. The cab bounced forward and rushed away up the street.

Karen crossed the sidewalk. Had she been drinking? . . . He wasn't certain. She stumbled on the stairs, but that might be because of the dark.

He heard her unlock the door, and she entered the hall and walked to her room. She moved about for a few minutes, opened and shut the closet door as she hung up her clothes and dropped one of her shoes to the floor. Then silence fell upon the flat.

KAREN WAS STILL ASLEEP THE NEXT MORNING WHEN JAN left for the docks, and he did not see her until evening. The moment he stepped inside the door he knew she was on her guard. What would he say? Would he reproach her for coming home so late last night?

But he had been thinking it over during the day, and had decided not to mention the previous night with one word. He still felt he had nothing to reproach her for.

He was aware of her nervous manner as they sat down to eat. She glanced at him as if to say: Now let us have it over with. But instead he talked about the weather and the docks.

Changes of expression came and went on her face. They were dueling, he and she, and the weapons were unspoken words. She knew what she had done or not done last night. And he had his assurance, which had come—he didn't know from where.

And because of this assurance Karen was forced to submit to him. At first she appeared reluctant to yield, even though it was a triumph that he believed so absolutely in her. But before long she surrendered completely. Her nervousness left her, and she grew calm.

"I'm going down to see Nils," said Jan after supper. "He

asked me to come over to his barge tonight. Wants to talk about something.”

She looked up quickly as if afraid he was retaliating for last night after all, for he seldom went anywhere in the evening without taking her. But then she knew it wasn't so. “Don't stay too late,” she said.

So Jan started out for the docks, and walking along the street he recalled what he knew of Nils so far. The bargeman was born in Sweden. The son of a retired seaman, Nils had loved the sea since his childhood, and had shipped out before he was fourteen. As for that girl he'd mentioned once—maybe he would tell about her tonight.

On the waterfront a cool tang in the air forecast autumn. Twilight hovered about docks and ships, and a flock of seagulls were fighting over scraps of food in the stream. As Jan approached the barge little Tyra set up a howl inside the cabin. But seeing him in the door she bounded over to him, stretched up her paws and growled with pure joy.

Nils put a marker in the book he was reading. “Good evening, Jan,” he said. “Glad to see you.”

Jan stepped inside. “Busy?” he asked with a glance at the stack of books on the table.

“I am reading a little,” said Nils, speaking in his formal way and using an English mostly learned from books.

“You said you wanted me to come over tonight.”

“Yes . . . I would like to talk to you about something. If you don't mind. I will make it very short. . . . If I tell you, then I think my mind will be free.”

“Go ahead.” He sat down on the bunk beside Tyra who looked at Nils with wise brown eyes, sensitive to her master's change of mood. She pricked up her black-pointed ears as a screaming gull swooped past the window out there.

“You know some of my story already,” Nils began after a pause. “How things were before . . .”

"Yes, you got along pretty well, didn't you? Had your master's ticket and all."

"I was studying for my license when I met that girl—you know. I will not tell her name. It is not necessary."

"Sure. I understand."

"Well, I was going to marine school in Sweden," Nils began, then continued to tell of how he had met a young girl—a gay and sweet girl, with laughing eyes and round cheeks. She wore a dress with a white lace collar the first time he saw her. She looked like somebody's little sister. He fell in love with her.

He saw the girl several times a week. One thing surprised him—she knew so much Danish, and after all, she was a Swedish girl. But she explained that. She said she often took the ferry across the narrow strait to Copenhagen, the gay Danish capital. She said she went with a girl friend who had relatives living there.

"I did not have much money in those days," Nils said, restlessly pacing the cabin floor. "You see, I was studying hard, and . . ."

"You hadn't been to sea for some time, and you were getting short," Jan filled in.

"Yes. But the girl . . . she always had money. She said she had good pay. Said she worked for a photographer. When we went to a restaurant she often paid the bill."

"And so?"

Nils looked tense and tormented. "Then I took my examination, and we were engaged. I loved her very much. I was happy when I went to sea again. Then . . . came that night in Bristol. I went aboard a Swedish ship and we all sat and talked and had drinks. One of the fellows told us of a girl he had picked up in Copenhagen, when he was home the last time . . ."

Interrupting himself he stepped to the window and looked out across the twilit river. When he turned around his face was drained.

"You mean," said Jan slowly, "that it was your girl he . . ."

"Yes . . . but there is one thing more."

"Get it off your chest."

"That fellow, he told us . . . how much he paid her. That is how she made her money."

Jan looked at his friend in silence.

Nils came and sat on the bunk and stroked Tyra's sleek fur. Minutes passed before he spoke again. "Well, that was the story," he said quietly. "I will try to forget now."

"That's right. But tell me one thing. Was she the first girl you got stuck on? Never been in love before that?"

"No . . . well, there was another girl I liked once. She was beautiful, but the cold type. One that should not marry. I did not think we could be happy."

Jan gave Nils a startled look.—A cold woman! Beautiful but cold! . . . He'd never thought of women in these terms. He'd taken for granted that all women were made for the fulfilment of love.

Nils busied himself with Tyra who insisted on making up for the neglect she suffered while her master spoke. Jan had time to think. He felt agitated and disturbed, and he thought of Karen. Was that, perhaps, the real trouble with her? Could there never be any real happiness with her? . . . He'd never been able to understand her, what was wrong, her peculiar ways. Did this explain it?

But then, floundering, he remembered moments when he felt warmth flowing through her. He had seen that warmth in her eyes, had sensed it in her voice. These moments were brief and far between, but they had been gradually more frequent. Perhaps she *was* coming closer to him? Perhaps. . . . He didn't know.

AFTER JAN LEFT THE BARGE HE RAMBLED ALONG THE DARK waterfront, feeling a need to bring his thoughts in order before he went home. He recalled what Nils had said about a woman who lacked power to be happy, or to make the man happy who loved her. How much misery she would bring with her wherever she went, especially if she were beautiful—as beautiful as Karen! Men would be drawn to her, would worship her. And there would be one man who would love her too dearly to part with her. Then what could follow but heartbreak?

And now he remembered something Lizzie told him on the boat from Indian Point. At the time he had been too distracted to pay attention, but her words registered in his mind. “Kelly likes his dames hot, see what I mean? Karen ain’t that kind. The Lord gave it all to her in looks.”

From the river rolled a ferry’s somber call. Jan strode on in restless haste. High above him the sky was strewn with stars. Lights glowed over on the Jersey shore.

Again he thought of the women Nils had spoken of.—Why were they born? Why did the life force produce such strange creatures, here to suffer and to cause suffering?

And why were such women created beautiful? Why given



charms to ensnare men if there could be no fulfilment?—Did not the Lord taunt human beings cruelly at times?

But he at once regretted that thought. And across the years, from his Catholic childhood in Bohemia, he received a stern rebuke. Not for him to question God's work. *His* ways are inscrutable, and unknowable is life's great mystery. It is for man to accept his fate unprotesting, for him to strive to do right according to his limited powers. And to have faith.

He passed the open gates of a pier shed, and the wind carried a whiff of spices and other aromatic cargo: tea, coffee, tar, turpentine, cinnamon. Men were at work under the lamps, moving cargo and trucking freight hoisted out of the ship.

He walked on, too disturbed to go home. And he recalled more that Lizzie had told him: "Kelly appreciates a pretty woman. He used to take Karen out to show her off, and they'd paint the town red."

At least one comfort here. He didn't have a rival in Kelly. Perhaps it was *that* Lizzie had wished to tell him—Kelly knew Karen's nature and only took her out to satisfy his vanity.

His rambling walk had brought him to the end of West Street. Here Twenty-third Street cut down from midtown, and here on the river's edge was the ferry house. A lighted Weehawken boat was just about to nose into its slip.

A cool wet night wind drew in from the river. Standing on the street corner Jan looked toward the heart of the city where dim and steep-walled buildings rose skywards in a blaze of white lights. Only four or five blocks away was Times Square, but the short distance was greater than the few blocks. He watched the city's nocturnal splendor with hostility. His visits there had been few, and he did not envy those who lived and worked there, for they were harassed prisoners of those stone walls. And he had seen their cast-off members drift down to the docks to beg for a day's work, which they were usually too frail to endure.

The city was evil. It destroyed the good in man, his inde-

pendence and his pride. It made him tricky and mean. And how could human beings remain human in that prison, always insecure and driven? Their vital force was sapped. True that splendor and glamor were created in the city. But health and strength and the soul's peace were the price. Jan preferred the waterfront, as Nils preferred his barge. He preferred the river and the hard work at the docks—the call of ships as they plowed up the fairway, the wind, the warm sun and a good sweat, the body-glow from a brisk working pace in winter cold, evening with dusk and tiredness and the thought of a good night's sleep.

He turned and walked back. He thought of Karen and longed to be home with her again. She too had once been a prisoner of the city.

AND MORNING. SLANTING SUNSHINE STRIKING THE JERSEY piers. Ships trumpeting off the shore. Inbound, from across the Atlantic, hailed by the pilots off Sandy Hook.

*The New York Times*. October 5, 1927. Shipping and Mails. Incoming Steamships:

*Berengaria*, the Cunard Line, from Southampton; will dock at West 14th Street.

*Bremen*, North German Lloyd; will dock in Hoboken, at 6th Street.

The weather:

Washington, Oct. 4.—*The disturbance that was over Virginia Monday night has advanced rapidly northeastward, being central north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The western disturbance is advancing eastward, being central over southeastern North Dakota. High pressure prevails in the region off Bermuda, over the Ohio Valley and Middle Appalachian region.*

And on the pier the busiest time of the year had come around—the season of apples and oranges, grapefruit, pears, bananas, and California fruit carted by rail across the continent and now shipped to London—there, by a mystery of com-

merce, to be sold cheaper than such fruit was disposed of on this side of the Atlantic.

It was a season Jan liked. Working with his gang on a barge he felt the wind cool his face. Yet the sun was bright. The sky was a soaring arch above earth, the river sun-glittering and blue. A shaggy-nosed tug chugged industriously along with a city-block of barges in tow. Puffs of steam rose in the luminous autumn air.

The days passed. Everything quiet at home. Anyway, an outward calm. But Jan knew that Karen had something on her mind. She was considerate to him, gentle even. But she looked preoccupied. He knew she often left the house while he worked at the docks, yet he mostly found her home in the evening.

Then one night she was gone. This happened near the end of the week, when he had worked overtime until nine o'clock. After supper he stretched out on the bed to wait for her, but being tired after a long day in the open his eyes soon closed.

A noise in the hall awakened him. Jumping to his feet in the dark, he switched on the light. Past two o'clock. There came another loud noise, and through the open door he saw Karen leaning against the wall, her head drooping on her breast.

He reached her side in two steps and put out his hand to support her. "Christ, what have you done!" he said in dismay.

She stared at him dully. "Go away," she slurred. "Leave me alone."

Taking her in his arms, he carried her into her room and laid her down on the bed. She lay there, limp and helpless, her eyes closed and one of her silk-stockinged legs hanging over the edge of the bed.

He knew where she had been. Knew whose doing this was. The scoundrel and the criminal! He wished to see his heart's blood for this!

But first Karen must be attended to. He took off her coat and flung it on a chair, then undressed her. Lipstick was smeared about her mouth, her golden hair was in disorder. He covered her with the blanket.

And now—if he could only reach the bastard responsible for this. Karen had stayed away from drink such a long time that he had begun to hope she would lose her craving for it. He had thought how fortunate that the danger was removed. And now Kelly destroying all that had been achieved!

Where could he find the man? His rage mounted. How could he find the bastard's address? . . .

He looked around the room. Where would be a likely place for Karen to keep her address book? He searched her dressing table. Nothing there but perfume and powder and a manicure set. He opened her hand bag. It contained only a few dollar bills and some change and a package of cigarettes. But his failure to find Kelly's address only infuriated him the more. He hated the beefy-cheeked swine, hated his arrogance. And he hated him for his hold on Karen. How in God's name could she bear him?

Was Kelly's address nowhere around? He felt sure it must be somewhere, for he had seen Karen write it down in her little book on the boat from Indian Point.

He pulled out the top drawer of the bureau. Filled with a mess of things, scarfs, gloves, and several pairs of silk stockings. But—what's this? In a corner of the drawer among some old papers he found a yellowed newspaper clipping. The headline: *Who Can Identify This Man?* And below this the reproduction of a photograph. A man and a woman. The man young and handsome, with thick black hair. The woman! . . . Jan started. She bore a resemblance to Karen. It was Karen. Only much younger than now. No mistake about it. Here in the picture she could be no more than eighteen or nineteen, her face rounded and smooth. But these were her features. This was her straight nose, her small mouth, her golden hair.

He feverishly began to read the article, dated seven years earlier. Karen must have been in this country only three or four years at the time. The story began by telling about a man found dead in the snow one winter morning outside a saloon up in Boston. He was a stranger there, but the bartender said the man had been hanging around the place for several days. He had been in poor health, shaggy and unkempt. He spoke to no one at the bar, but stood with his drink in moody silence. His funds had apparently given out, for he didn't have a cent in his pockets when found in the snow. And no identification of any kind, except a letter and a photograph. The latter, reprinted with this article, had been taken in earlier and happier days. The woman might be his wife. If she or anyone else recognized the man in the picture, would they notify the police? The letter was reprinted below, but it bore no date, and no signature.

Jan looked up as he heard a low whimper from Karen. She was moaning in her drunken sleep. Nothing he could do for her just now. And he started to read the letter found with the dead man.

*Dearest,*

*I want to write to you and speak to you once more. First of all because I love you. I could never do otherwise. I thought I had another "go" in me. But I was wrong. Something has gone to pieces in me, and I just can't manage any more. But I'm not blaming you, darling. I am blaming no one. Things just happened this way. It was the will of fate, I guess.*

*I could not blame you for anything. For I've learned a great deal during these three years since I left you. And I understand you better now. Darling girl, I wish I had the strength to come back to you again and help you. For you need someone at your side. But you need someone stronger than I am. And still—I used to think there was nothing I could not stand up against.*

*I write to you because I must. I am not well. Things have gone all wrong since I left Norway. I think I understand now why our marriage went on the rocks. I wonder if things would have happened otherwise if I had known then what I do now.*

*I will be frank. I don't think you ever loved me, dearest girl. You were drawn to me for another reason, I believe. For now I understand (in some way I have learned it) that women like you are drawn to kind men. (And many faults I have, but I feel I can say I am kind.) You are drawn to kind men because you know instinctively that the others would hurt you. You need sympathy and understanding. All that I have now. But you also need a strong man to lean on. And my strength is gone.*

*Darling, if you should not hear from me again, or if you should learn that I am dead—please communicate with my father. Tell him that I wrote to you and gave you all my love. Tell him that my last wish is the hope that life will not be too unkind to you. Tell him that I would die in peace if I knew that he would never let you be in want.*

The letter did not seem to have been finished. Scrawled with a stubby pencil further down on the page was a word which evidently had been put down long after the letter was written, and in a mood of great emotion, perhaps despair. One single word: *Elskede*—loved one.

Turning to the bed Jan looked at Karen, her golden hair disheveled, her face white and drawn in her stupor. So she had been married once! Ten long years ago. She had been just a girl then, as untouched by life as the picture on this clipping showed. What had not happened to her since! . . .

And he thought of that chilly spring morning when he found her dazed and hurt. He did not then know how much she had suffered, did not know how much she needed him. “. . . my last wish the hope that life will not be too unkind

to you." That other man was speaking to him. A voice from the beyond. He, too, had loved Karen deeply.

Moved and shaken by all that he had unexpectedly learned, Jan slowly paced the floor. One thing was certain. His relationship with Karen had come to a new stage. They had reached a deepening stream.



IT WAS LATE BY THE TIME JAN PUT THE CLIPPING BACK IN the drawer. Then he carried his cot into Karen's room, thinking it safer to sleep there in case something should happen to her during the night.

Morning came without further mishap, however, and he was off to the docks early as usual. He left Karen with anxiety, but it wouldn't do to be absent from the Shape and risk his status as a regular.

At the pier the seasonal freight rush was at its full tide Europewards—an endless stream of red California apples and pale-yellow grapefruit, boxed and crated, and mixing their fruit smell with other spicy odors in the shed. And shiploads of grain. Loaded barges crowded the slip.

While Jan worked he kept thinking of the clipping and the story it told. Had Karen notified the police? He didn't think so, for it was more like her not to make herself known. And had she written to her dead husband's father, as the letter urged her? Probably not. She could be fiercely proud at times. He decided that his having found her helpless and adrift must show that she had cast loose from all that tied her to Norway.

A tangy autumn wind swept across the sun-glittering river outside the shed. The tide was in, the water flowing swiftly

from the ocean. The stream swarmed with barges, tugboats and lighters. And several liners were coming in from the sea that day. The shipping page had announced the Cunarder *Mauretania* due to arrive from Southampton. The Red Star liner *Belgenland* would also make port; and the M.S. liner *Leviathan*. A busy day on the river. The air filled with deep-throated calls.

A fleet of barges had to be cleared in a hurry, so at ten o'clock the harassed Honest Persson stepped outside the gates to hire what extras he could find. A hundred and fifty good men had been turned back that morning in the eight o'clock Shape, and most of them wandered off to try their luck elsewhere. Those who were now hanging about the gates were mostly drifters from the city, with a cowed air. "Come on," Persson growled. "You, and you! Hurry up and get inside."

When such a bunch of incompetents were hired, the custom was to mix a few of them here and there among the regulars and put them to jobs requiring no skill. And this Persson proceeded to do. He ordered three of them to stay with Jan's gang. "Do the best you can with them," he apologized. "I'll hire a better crowd at one o'clock."

Jan told the fellows what to do, but he was busy and driven and could spare no time to instruct them. Mixed with the professional longshoremen the newcomers seemed awkward and weak, and were more hindrance than help. One of them had even come without a cargo hook!

Jan watched the nervous city fellows pawing at the crates with helpless bare hands, and decided something must be done about it. The way they worked he feared they might kill themselves. And having no time to teach them the use of the steel hook, he tucked them into one of the covered barges with instructions to look as busy as they could when the foreman came around. Better to have them out of the way. He and the other members of the gang needed elbow room to attack the mounting onrush of freight.

AT LUNCH TIME JAN SAW LITTLE FREDDIE REED SITTING in a corner of the cafeteria. Freddie looked lonely and glum, and Jan went over to his table. "Whose funeral?" he said. "Cheer up."

"What's there for me to be so cheerful about?" Freddie said. "Nobody likes to be a flop. The game's up, I guess."

"What you mean?"

Freddie gestured to a newspaper beside him on the table. "Read for yourself."

Bending over the page, Jan's eye was caught by a prominent headline: *Longshoremen Get Raise. New Schedule Effective Today at North Atlantic Ports.*

"I heard about it," he said, continuing to read:

*The new schedule of rates for longshoremen and checkers in the North Atlantic ports will become effective today, a majority of the local unions of the territory affected having authorized the signing of a new agreement with the Transatlantic Steamship Conference. . . .*

"So, what you mean the game is up?"

"Don't you see? That raise spells my defeat. The guys who run the union are pretty smart in their way. They know that

if they can throw a few more cents an hour to you fellows you'll keep quiet and forget all about everything else. Hell of a lot of good it will do me to talk about hiring halls now. Who'll listen? They're getting a raise!"

Jan rubbed his chin. Freddie was right.

A glow came to Freddie's lean face, a glow of anger and bitterness. "Don't misunderstand me," he said. "Not that you shouldn't have your little raise. I see the Government has just handed a couple of \$14,000,000 mail subsidies to one of the steamship companies on the West Coast, still the men out there work for starvation wages.—Some \$30,000,000 of the taxpayers' money, my boy! 60,000 bucks for each pound of mail! And the Post Office rate is 27 cents. Pretty smooth!"

"Well . . . I don't know much about all that," said Jan slowly. "But . . ."

"Maybe you think ships have got to be subsidized?" Freddie filled in. "Jan, I know all the arguments. I know that American ships cost more to build and more to run. I know that other governments subsidize their merchant marines. And I know that cargo ships are a kind of auxiliary of the Navy, and we can't afford to be caught short in case of war. I know all that. And it's not the subsidizing of ships I'm against, but the fattening of grubby shipowners."

Jan's face was a question mark.

Now Freddie sounded angry. "Don't tell me you didn't read about that investigation in Congress last year? Well, I was vastly interested, and I remember and I can quote. There was Senator Green quizzing Woodbridge who owns those Wappo ships: *Can Mr. Woodbridge justify or explain his expense accounts studded with such items as meals \$75 per day; waiters \$100; entertainment \$120?*"

Jan had no answer, but his eyes were big.

"Pop-eyed, eh?" Freddie snapped. "You babe in the wood."

He flung out his hand. "I'm not a fanatic, Jan. I try to be reasonable and just. And I say again that you deserve your

little raise. It's only that I fear those few cents will have to cover a lot of sins. Think about it the next time you get soaked in the rain, as you wait in the Shape. Think about it when you see two hundred poor devils pushed back by the Stevedore. Then see if a raise is enough."

Jan looked in surprise at the scrawny fellow in front of him. Freddie had never sounded so outraged. "Those high-faluting announcements," he continued. "New schedule effective to-day at North Atlantic ports! Good God, there hasn't been anything new down here in a hundred years! It's the same old grab politics from those who've got the power—and I mean both shipowners and union heads. Who cares for the men?"

Jan said nothing. Being one of the longshoremen he knew their fears. Squawk, and something happened to you. If you didn't get your head bashed in, you could be sure of losing your job.

Freddie stared out the window. Across the tracks, beyond the high concrete wall separating the piers from the street, he saw black masts, derricks and booms outlined against the blue autumn sky. Over on that side of the wall was the shipowners' territory—shared by the International Longshoremen's Association, AFL. Rank-and-file organizers were not popular with either group.

"I hate to give up," Freddie said, turning to Jan. "Hate to let those bastards get the best of me—and of all of us."

"Why not lay low for the time being at least?" Jan suggested. "Where are your folks?"

Freddie smiled grimly. "My folks won't do me any good. They wouldn't have me back even if I came creeping on my knees. I'm the black sheep of the family."

"Black sheep! How come?"

"Sure, I'm from New England," Freddie said, chuckling. "My father is the Rev. Kenneth D. Reed of the First Congregational Church in Portland, Maine.—Tallest spire in town," he added with an ironical glint in his eyes. "Yes, and if father's

hair is a little whiter than it ought to be, it's because his only and beloved son turned out to be what I am."

Jan looked with new interest at this odd Freddie Reed.

"Why so startled?" Freddie asked.

"Well, I was thinking. A man like you . . ."

"A man like me a labor organizer. Well, and who's had better training for the job? All my childhood my father drilled the Christian principles into me. The brotherhood of man. Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Jan ate in silence while Freddie continued talking. The little Yankee smiled quietly, as if he didn't at all regret the choice he had made. "It wasn't as simple as that though," he said. "I didn't plan it this way. In my second year in college I got fed up with things. Got tired of hearing father's safe platitudes. And then something happened. This was in 1919 during the steel strike. I don't know if you were here then?"

"Over in France."

"Oh, yes. Well, we had that strike. The men were worked ten and twelve hours a day, you know. And here's where my dad came in. Up he pops in the pulpit and delivers a rattling sermon. I'll never forget it as long as I live. I sat among the congregation, and my ears burned. Father raved because the Inter-Church Commission recommended that the steel workers' hours should be reduced. He struck the pulpit with his hand. That is the hobo's doctrine! he roared. How could it ever be advocated by a confessed follower of the ceaseless Toiler of Galilee who said in reply to His critics that objected to His Sunday work, I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work."

Jan met Freddie's eyes. Both men smiled.

"Well, that was all I could take," Freddie said. "I ran away to sea."

He sat ruminating for a few minutes, then continued talking: "But life aboard ship wasn't what I had read about in

books. Filthy forecastles for the crew. Lousy grub, and bunks so full of bugs you were nearly eaten alive. Sure there was the International Seamen's Union, AFL. But what did that crowd ever do for the seamen? Ask the boys, they'll tell you."

"So what did you do? Organize the seamen?"

"No. For one reason or another—I didn't take so well to the sea. And then, something else happened. I came back to the States. A gray winter day. Coming down the gangplank I saw a lot of men standing in the rain outside one of the pier gates. That was up near Twenty-third Street. What's that? I thought. Then I realized they were being hired for the afternoon—some of them! The rest shuffled off, soaked to the skin. Well, that's how I started. I had my job cut out for me right here."

Jan played absently with some bread crumbs on the sloppy table top. Like every other longshoreman he was reluctant to talk about the waterfront affairs.

The New Englander brought out his watch. "Got to be off," he said.

"Working?"

"I've a temporary job with a trucking firm around the corner. Repair man."

"Well, I'll be seeing you."

Freddie smiled. "I'll be around. Forget my griping. A fellow's got to bellyache once in a while."

A FEW DAYS PASSED. THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED TO REMIND Jan how much Karen depended on him. Nothing had been said about that night when she came home drunk, for he was afraid to aggravate her. Instead he tried to calm her quivering nerves. But, as before, his attitude only served to irritate her. "Don't coddle me," she snapped at him. "I'm no child."

He came near to replying: "But you are." For she seemed like a child in many ways, even though infinitely more worldly wise than himself. So many of her attitudes were those of one who hasn't really grown up—her love of glitter and amusement, her theatrics and posturing. He felt much older and more mature than she. And for all her sophistication he was aware of her helplessness.

One evening she appeared particularly nervous. She looked torn and dissatisfied.

Jan felt his way carefully, making a noncommittal remark about a ship which had docked that day. But she didn't answer. Only picked at her food, and sat staring darkly before her.

After supper Jan went to his quarters. Some fifteen minutes



later he heard a sudden piercing cry from Karen in her room, followed by the sound of a falling body.

He ran through the hall. And there she lay on the floor in a seizure, her slender body rocked with convulsions, her head rolling from side to side.

Hurriedly bending over her he loosened the dress at her neck, as the doctor long ago instructed him. He put a pillow under her head, for she was striking it against the floor. Her face had grown dusky. She opened and closed her hands spasmodically, and her body was cruelly racked.

He did what he could to prevent her from hurting herself as she thrashed the air with her arms. Watching her contorted face a fresh wave of compassion welled up in his breast, and he knew how much he loved her. The seizures no longer held any terror for him, for he had learned that they were not nearly as dangerous as they seemed. Yet he felt sick at heart. He had warded off these attacks for so long that he'd hoped they would never plague her again.

He wiped her moist face. Soon the seizure lost its hold on her, and her body grew limp. She gasped for breath. Her bosom rose and fell.

Then he lifted her up on the bed. She was plunged into oblivion, and might pass from this stage into sleep.

Sitting down beside her, he felt certain that this attack struck her because of her drinking bout a few days before. And Kelly was responsible for that. He cursed the man, and his hatred for him flared once more. If Kelly had not returned into Karen's life all danger might have been left behind.

She was resting more easily now. Bending forward he watched her drawn face. Her regular breathing told him that she slept.

She slept soundly all night. And still in the morning she looked tired and depressed, for that was the aftermath of the seizures. But her irritation was gone, as though consumed in the fire of last night's ordeal. Jan had come to know every

phase of her various moods. This morning she felt rueful, but not inwardly torn.

When he met her eyes they were full of apology. But he did not mention last night. He glanced at the window. Another fine autumn day. He might work overtime that night, he said. She should not worry if he didn't come home at the usual time.

THE MORNING AIR WAS COOL AND CRISP AS JAN SET OUT for the docks and shaped up. Soon the progress of work shook the pier. Jan and three other fellows were manipulating a large crate of plate glass when one of the gang foremen came tearing along. "Hey, Jan," he called. "The Big Boss wants to see you."

Jan glanced up, his shoulder steadying the crate. "Who? The Boss?"

"Yeah. Mr. McCarthy. Said for you to come to his office right away."

Jan answered with a grunt, red in the face from exertion on the crate. It had to be handled with skill, otherwise—goodbye, plate glass. "Can't come this minute," he growled. "Got to shift this damn thing. I'll be over in a little while."

"Okay," said he whom the Big Boss had sent, and raised his eyebrows and shrugged. He had delivered the message, and his expression said clearly that nobody would catch *him* keeping James McCarthy waiting. No, sir, not on your life. When McCarthy sent for someone that man dropped whatever he had in his hands and reported to McCarthy's office at once.

Jan and his gang jockeyed the plate glass on top of two pipe rollers. And now the unwieldy object must be rolled off and

carefully attended to until it was where it belonged.—“McCarthy,” Jan muttered. “What the hell does he want?”

Ten minutes later the glass crate was safely stowed away. Jan knocked at James McCarthy’s office door and entered. The dour Lord of the Pier sat hulked in his swivel chair as usual—two hundred and forty pounds of him—examining piles of consignments, charts of stowage and freight lists. He was arrayed in a serge jacket today, as protection against the autumn chill. The jacket strained across his powerful shoulders, and the vest was left unbuttoned in front to ease his paunch. Looking through the window a moment ago he might have seen Jan coming, but gave no sign of being aware of his presence. He continued reading as before.

“You want to see me?” said Jan.

The swivel chair gave a muffled creak, so McCarthy must have stirred. He furrowed his brow while studying an important-looking document. His smoothly-shaved, flabby old face looked rather flustered, however, as though a vigorous emotion was working within.

Jan cleared his throat.

At last McCarthy put the document down, performing the inconsequential act with great ceremony and undue deliberation, as if wishing to impress upon Jan the fact that he, James McCarthy, was a man of momentous decisions. He removed his glasses and wiped them with a white handkerchief pulled from his breast pocket. That done, and the glasses back on his nose, he slowly swung the swivel chair around—the chair groaning to high heaven—and fastened his incredulous stare on Jan. “Why don’t you come when I send for you?” he demanded, in a tone of stern reprimand.

Jan shifted his weight onto his other foot. “Well . . . I’m here,” he said politely.

“You’re here!” McCarthy exploded. “I see damn well you’re

here! What I want to know is: why don't you come when I call you? I sent for you an hour ago."

"Ten minutes."

"Ten! Don't contradict me!" McCarthy roared, the glasses trembling on his nose. "If I say it's an hour it's an hour, do you hear!"

"I was busy," said Jan, frowning at all this hullabaloo. His reddening neck indicated that he had a pretty good temper himself stowed away—he didn't quite know where, it was so long since he'd enjoyed a real good splurge.

"Busy!" McCarthy repeated, his rasping voice deceptively soft. He smiled savagely, as if this were Satan's own joke: first, one of his hands from out there failing to respond to his summons, and then blandly explaining the neglect on the grounds of having been busy. He struck his fist against the arm support. The swivel chair shrieked. "You mean I am busy!" he shouted. "Too damn busy to waste my time arguing with you!"

"Well," said Jan stiffly, "we were moving a crate of plate glass, me and a couple of other guys, and I just couldn't drop it like that. The stuff breaks easily. Not just any man can handle it. Got to be experienced."

McCarthy rubbed his nose. The explosive air seemed to go out of him. He nodded. . . . Didn't he use to handle plate glass himself, years ago, when he was a young fellow learning freight-handling out in the shed. And, Jesus Christ, the time and care you got to give that confounded glass! All out of proportion to the freight charge. "Damn the stuff," he growled.

"Speak to me?" said Jan.

"What? . . . Why, no. I was merely saying that plate glass is a nuisance, ain't it?"

"It sure is."

Their eyes met. McCarthy shuffled the papers on his desk, but by no means in imperious McCarthy's best style. His air was rather that of a man harried by this looney shipping business, chained to a complaining swivel chair, and bereft of all

fun. The bags drooped under his eyes; the jowls sagged below his chin. Jan found it impossible to stay sore at him.

Then, rolling his bulk in the chair, McCarthy genially lit a big black cigar. "Sit down," he said. "Sit down, Jan. I want to talk to you."

Jan took the chair. But he sat very much on the edge. For although he didn't carry any grudge against McCarthy he did in no way trust these friendly overtures.

Leaning back, McCarthy crossed his legs and blew a cloud of beautiful bluish cigar smoke towards the ceiling. His pink face was benign, and he shoved a stubby thumb comfortably under his arm pit. "Jan," he began affably, "you've been working here a pretty long time, haven't you?—Ten years," he added, with a pretended glance at a chart. For he liked to give the impression of one who knew everything about his men.

"That's right," said Jan soberly.

"Yeah," McCarthy mused, "you've got a good record. Pretty smart man, I hear."

"Well . . . thank you."

McCarthy smoked his cigar, seeming to have plumb forgotten his earlier declaration that he was much too busy to talk. "Yeah," he said, gazing thoughtfully at the curling smoke. "We need good men around here. Fellows we can depend on and what knows their jobs. I keep a record," he said, putting his solid mitt on a sheaf of papers on the desk.

Jan nodded dutifully, wondering what in the name of God all this would lead to.

He would soon know. McCarthy coughed weightily. "Jan," he said, so pleased with himself that Jan almost expected him to purr, "how'd you like to become a foreman out there?"

"Who—me? . . ." Jan sat up straight.

McCarthy hugely enjoyed Jan's surprise. He *did* purr now, or maybe it was but a murmur from the swivel chair. Anyone could see that McCarthy was a glad giver. But it was also clear that he was fashioned out of the same frail clay as are all men.

Just weak and vain human flesh now waiting for Jan to express his gratefulness and pleasure. He puffed expectantly on his big black cigar.

Jan scratched his head. "Well, thanks," he said, but with none of the enthusiasm McCarthy had hoped for. "I sure appreciate it. But, I don't know . . ."

McCarthy took the cigar from his mouth. His pink face drooped, his pride was cruelly hurt. He put down the cigar—partly because this was no proper time for a genial smoke, partly because he wished to gain time. He was not only hurt. He was dumbfounded. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before.

Then summoning his dignity he rolled his bulk to a more upright and impressive position in the tormented chair. "Do I understand," he said testily, "that you're not interested in my proposition?"

"Well," said Jan uncomfortably, "thank you, but I'm satisfied as it is, if you don't mind."

McCarthy savagely shuffled a sheaf of innocent consignments. "Give me your reasons," he demanded. "Don't you realize what this means? The prestige . . . the higher pay you'd get?"

Jan knew all that. But he couldn't very well give McCarthy his reasons for refusing this offer to become foreman on the pier. For one thing, he just couldn't see himself bossing his old pals and giving them hell, as a foreman was supposed to do to whip up the working pace. And then . . . well, he just couldn't stomach the idea of himself going over to the ship-owners' side, so to speak, and becoming an ally of the outfit that ran the waterfront show. Not that he hadn't been treated pretty well himself, all considering. But he was no fool. He saw what went on around him. Only lose favor with the hiring Stevedore, and your job was gone. Then, too—here this spunky Freddie Reed tried to make things a little better for the long-shoremen. And while Jan didn't openly dare to side with

Freddie, he'd be damned if he cared to gang up on Freddie and become a pal of his enemies.

He rose, twiddling his cap. "Thanks," he said to the stunned and no longer pink and beaming McCarthy. "I sure appreciate this, but . . . I . . ."

McCarthy struck the desk. "You mean you're actually turning down my offer!" he roared. "Here I want to do you a favor, and see what I get!"

"I'm sorry, but that's how I feel."

Silence followed—a silence with the clangorous pier outside the windows. A steamer bellowed in the river. A host of tugboats shrieked.

McCarthy's bulk lay loose and ineffectual in the mute swivel chair. Jan felt almost sorry for him. He looked so disappointed that it would have moved a harder heart than Jan's.

"The old geezer might fire me for this," he thought as he sidled towards the door. The prospect weakened his knees for a moment, for where would he get another job? But it couldn't be helped. He'd made up his mind.

"I guess I'd better go back to my gang," he said, reaching for the door knob. "Thanks a lot just the same." And with that he went outside. Glancing back he saw McCarthy staring bleakly after him, deflated and without even a roar left.



THE LIMPID AUTUMN DAYS PASSED ALL TOO SOON. OVER IN Jersey the scarlet leaves burned to a dull brown, then like flocks of migrating birds wandered with the chilly blast and were gone. Raw cold set in. The sky was no longer a soaring vault above earth; drizzly mist rolled through the Hudson Valley, shrouding ships and piers and drawing melancholy warnings from the foghorns of river boats and seagoing craft.

Early one afternoon almost the whole force of longshoremen was sent home from the pier. The ship would load bulk grain, and as that is poured into the holds by means of elevated machinery only a small crew was needed for the rest of that day.

Karen looked flustered when Jan stepped inside the door. Yes, it would do him good to get an afternoon's rest, she agreed. Only—he must not mind that they'd have a visitor. It so happened that Lizzie would be here any moment. "But we'll be in my room," she quickly explained. "Don't bother to show yourself. Why don't you take a nap?"

Jan said perhaps he would. He had been working nights a great deal during the autumn rush, and he could do with a few hours' extra sleep. But Karen's eagerness to have him out

of the way aroused his suspicion. Must be something doing. He would keep eyes and ears open, for he'd an inkling that this was very much his business. If Lizzie knew something Karen didn't want him to know, then, by God, he wanted that information!

After having washed he sauntered to the kitchen door and watched Karen put away some dishes in the closet. He yawned and stretched himself. "I'm feeling kind of sleepy," he said. "Think I'll hit the hay."

"Why don't you," she encouraged him. "You look all in."

"Yeah, I'll take a nap. Well, give Lizzie my best when she comes."

"Yes, yes." Her gaze flew to the clock. "Now off with you before you get wide awake," she said and shoved him into the hall.

His imitation of a tired man was perfect as he shuffled to his room. He made a great to-do about closing the door, and was it his fault that it didn't lock properly? Karen failed to notice, however. Peeping through the crack he saw a smile flicker across her face.

So you think you've fixed it up pretty well, he muttered, for the first time really angry at her. That she should be cursed with troubles and be difficult to handle—he accepted that much. But if she tried to put something over on him he would show her another side of his character. He didn't care to be anybody's fool.

What had she cooked up, anyhow? Lizzie coming to see her! That little monkey-face, what great secrets could she have that he must be put to bed and gotten out of the way? He told himself that if Karen had any secret truck with Kelly he was through with her. And, by Jesus, he'd take a crack at the beefy-cheeked guy! He'd find his hangout and beat the living day-lights out of him. About time Karen made up her mind. It would have to be Kelly or himself now.

The door bell! . . . There she came! He was all attention

as Karen hurried to the door. Lizzie, all right! Just listen to the little monkey. "Karen, darlin', how are you? Oh, Lordy me, I'm feelin' badly! Blub-blub . . ."

Was she drunk? he wondered. There! . . . Karen hushed her. "Sh-sh! Not so loud. . . . Jan . . . other room."

Bet your life he's here, he said under his breath. He waited until Karen had whisked Lizzie into her room, then tiptoed to the door and made the crack just a bit wider. Might come in handy later on.

So now they were in Karen's room, those two, Lizzie talking in shrill tones again, and Karen hushing her. The way Lizzie blubbered something out of the ordinary must have happened. He put his ear to the wall, but Karen was a sly one, and toned Lizzie down every time the woozy little dame raised her voice. He did hear Kelly's name repeated, however, not once but several times.

Soon the wider door crack did come in handy. Karen and Lizzie had been engaged in an intense but hushed conversation, with now and then a louder spurt from Lizzie. Then all was quiet for a spell. Next Karen stepped into the hall and called back to Lizzie: "What shall I get? A coffee ring, or just plain rolls?"

"A coffee ring, dearie," Lizzie replied in weak tones.

Jan perked up. Aha! He knew the bakery shop. Three blocks away. Now if he could only get a word with Lizzie while Karen was out!

"I'll be right back," he heard Karen say. "Be quiet, and take it easy." She lowered her voice. "We'll manage him, Lizzie. Don't worry."

Jan was on his toes. Manage him! Manage who?

The door lock clicked. Karen had gone. Now was his chance, if he only knew how to use it. Karen wouldn't be away long. He'd have to work fast.

Then—what's that? A blubbering sound from the next

room! Lizzie crying! And now she started to bawl in an outburst of despair. What was all this racket about?

Following a sudden impulse he sneaked out into the hall and looked into Karen's room where Lizzie was lying on the couch, sobbing with abandon and wiping her eyes with a crumpled handkerchief.

"Lizzie," he said and crossed the threshold. "What's the matter? Why so tragic?"

She raised her head, her face a mess of powder and tears and smeared lipstick. She hiccuped, and her frail body shook. "Hello," she said weakly, brushing at her eyes. "You gotta excuse me. I ain't a pretty sight today."

"What's wrong?"

"Wrong!" she cried bitterly, his kind voice causing her tears to flow once more. But she let them flow, and hardly cared to wipe them off. "Seems everything's gone wrong. And me that's been standin' by that man through thick an' thin, an' never failed him once. Stood by him when his own wife wouldn't have nothin' to do with him. Through thick an' thin, I'm tellin' you. And then he goes back on me like that."

Jan managed a word of sympathy. He knew she referred to Kelly, but the rest left him mystified.

"It ain't that I want to say nothin' against him," Lizzie continued, wiping her nose and her eyes. "He's a wonderful man an' all that, an' I'm not blaming Karen either. She's an old friend o' mine, and I'm one that stands by my friends . . ."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Jan demanded, his face turning white.

"Don't you know?" she sniveled.

"No. Jesus, no!"

She threw a fearful glance at the outside door. He understood, and went and released the safety lock. "She'll think it snapped shut of itself," he said, coming back into the room. "We'll hear when she tries the knob. Talk fast now. Tell me—what's been going on behind my back?"

"But, dearie, don't you know?" she inquired again, still flabbergasted at his ignorance.

"I don't know a thing. Don't ask me questions. Talk."

She fumbled with the moist handkerchief. She couldn't find words when ordered to talk with concentration. Rambling was her natural mode of discourse.

"Talk!" he implored her. "For God's sake, tell me what you know. Karen will be here any minute."

"Well . . . it . . . it started a couple o' weeks ago when Kelly made that pass at her."

"What pass?"

"Sure, they were alone. Just the two of them. She told me. I thought she'd told you. Slapped his face when he tried to lay his hands on her. Good thing too. Here I've been standin' by him, I have, an' . . ."

"Sure, sure. But never mind that now." He was leaning forward, perturbed, agitated, bewildered. "Explain," he said thickly. "Explain. How long has this been going on? I thought you said on the boat that Kelly didn't feel that way about her."

She again regarded him with bottomless surprise. "But, Lordy me!" she gasped. "Don't you know about Karen . . ."

"I've told you I don't know a damn thing," he groaned. "Jesus Christ, Lizzie, don't waste any more time. Talk, or I choke you!"

"But . . . you're her husband," she stammered. "I can't understand."

"Forget what you can't understand. Tell me what's happened."

"She's changed, sort of. You ought to know that, dearie. Please, don't be cross with me. I'm unhappy enough as it is."

"Changed?"

"Sure. She ain't like she used to be. You should know that. Says to me herself, I'm different, she says. I'm a different woman, Lizzie, so help me God. An' I think it's got to do with Jan."

Bending forward he seized Lizzie's frail wrist, staring at her smeared and wrinkled face. "You swear?" he said tensely. "She said that?"

"Cross my heart. May I never take another breath if I lie. I'm givin' you her own words. He's a dear, she says. Jan is. He never said a cross word to me. Always makes me feel good, she says. An' I'm tellin' you, Jan, it makes a big difference to a woman if a man's kind to her. Maybe when you're young an' flighty you don't give a damn the one way or the other, but as you're gettin' older you appreciate kindness in a man. Works like a charm. A woman falls for it every time."

He was still staring at her. Speechless. Lizzie sniffled and blew her nose in the damp handkerchief.

He found words at last. "And she said that . . . that she cares for me?"

"Sure. I wouldn't lie to you for anythin' in the world, I wouldn't."

He looked at her as though she were the most beautiful woman on earth. "Lizzie, do you realize how much this means to me?"

"Sure, dearie. I do. An' . . ." She gave a start. Footsteps were heard out on the stairs.

"I . . . we must meet somewhere," Jan said feverishly. "I want to talk to you, more. Quick. Where?"

Her splotched face was a blank. She couldn't even think under such pressure. Karen was trying the door.

"Twenty-third Street ferry," he suggested at random, seizing upon what first popped into his mind. "Tomorrow night at eight o'clock." Then running into the hall he reached his room just as Karen turned the key and opened the outside door.

BACK IN HIS OWN ROOM AGAIN JAN WAS IN A STATE OF intense excitement, for Lizzie's rambling talk suggested all kinds of startling developments, some marvelous, others quite terrible. But one thing was clear: Karen had changed. So he wasn't wrong in believing he had sensed warmth in her blue eyes lately. Others were aware of it.

Kelly, too, had noticed the change in her, and evidently lost no time trying to take advantage of it. Jan dug his fingernails into his palms, smoldering with jealous rage. He suffered agonies in picturing Kelly and Karen alone together, and that sensuous bastard touching Karen with his pudgy hands.

But joy leaped in him. Karen had confided to Lizzie that she cared for him. They had come that close at last, he and she! But why had she not told him? Why did she keep back those words he was so hungry to hear? Still, it was just like her, fearing chains above all other things in this world. Perhaps she was afraid that words of love would cage her. But she had told Lizzie at least.

And she had slapped Kelly's face! Good for the swine! Only—would she push him back the next time he came around? Who could tell? He seemed to have a way with women. They were drawn to him. Some of them clung to him,

suffered for his sake, and even went to jail because of their loyalty to him. Jan sweated with anguish. Karen was not safe with that Kelly. If only he were out of the way!

The next day never seemed to end, Jan was so anxious to meet Lizzie and hear what more information she had for him. After the five o'clock whistle had blown on the windy pier he still had three hours to wait, for it wouldn't do to go home, and then raise Karen's suspicions by starting out again.

He sat in the cafeteria for an hour or more, reading the evening paper. On the front page was more news of the rum-running racket. The public had grown used to these doings, but now Jan read about them with fresh interest, hoping that among the rumrunners caught there would be one by the name of Kelly. Tonight's paper told of a police raid right here on the waterfront. Large stores of liquor had been seized, and a gang of bootleggers nabbed just as they were trying to truck the stuff away.

Shortly after seven he felt too restless to sit still, so he left the cafeteria. Out in the street he almost bumped into a man. The fellow gave him a sharp look as he ducked in among the shadows of the wall. He could be a longshoreman—a short thick-set guy. But what made him seem unusual? Those little bright eyes? . . . Then Jan remembered. This was the fellow who slipped into Al's bar that time when Freddie held his rank-and-file meeting, the fellow who carried his hook on the wrong side. He was off now in the dark of West Street, the sound of his footsteps lost around the corner.

Jan continued his walk in the opposite direction, past the lighted windows of ship chandleries, toward the Twenty-third Street ferry house. The November night was chill, and a whistling wind blew in from the river. Bright stars glittered in the sky. Dodging a truck he crossed the street and reached the ferry house just as a shadowy craft glided out of the river murk.



He watched the clumsy craft maneuver into its slip. Then since it was still early he strolled slowly up along the open piers of Thirteenth Avenue, past Anchor Line and American and Cuban, weaving in and out among the cruising taxis that honked their horns at him. But at the Lackawanna freight depot he halted and walked back to the ferry house, afraid to miss Lizzie. The new hope for Karen and himself was like a fever in his blood. It was an overwhelming thought that Karen and he would soon leave all conflict behind them.

Turning up his collar against the wind he peered to right and left in his anxious look-out for Lizzie. Now suppose she shouldn't come! Something might have changed her plans, and how then would he be able to get in touch with her? Fool he had been not to take her address!

A ferry tooted somberly out in midstream. The Weehawken boat. A blast of wind howled.

Suddenly Lizzie popped up, almost in front of him. She came tripping on her high heels with little mincing steps, and wrapped to her ears in a swanky fur coat, a gift from Kelly, no doubt, the coat purchased, perhaps, after some particularly successful deal of his.

"Hello, Lizzie," he said, with relief.

"Jan, is that you?"

"Yes. I was afraid you wouldn't come."

She glanced behind her, and to right and left to make sure she wasn't followed. "We gotta be careful," she whispered. "He'd kill me, he would, if he should ever know."

"Where do you want us to go?" he asked. "Some place where you can have a cup of hot coffee to warm you up."

"No, no! Lordy, no! Someone might see us. Would be the end o' me. Let's stay right here." She drew him further in under the canopy. "I won't stay long, Jan. I'm scared. I shouldn't of come at all. I've been thinkin' and thinkin'. Now, it ain't that I've got anything against Kelly, understand. He's

a great and wonderful man, and I'm standin' by him, I am. It's only that after all these years . . ."

"Lizzie," he interrupted her, "tell me about Karen."

"Yes, sure, dearie, I know. I know how it is, an' I don't blame you. But promise me one thing. Promise for sure you'll never give him away if you should find out somethin' that's not—what-you-might-call-it—hunky-dory, you know."

"I want him to leave Karen alone, that's all."

"Sure, and that's what I want myself. You don't blame me, do you? Here I've been standin' by him, an' . . ."

"I know how you feel, Lizzie. You and I are after the same thing. You want to keep Kelly for yourself, and I want to keep Karen."

"Yes, sure, an' . . ."

"So you help me, and I'll help you."

"Sure, dearie, sure. You're a good man. I know I can trust you. Never—you swear that—never will you tell on him, will you?"

"I promise."

"Good. Because he's having plenty o' troubles, and I just don't know what's goin' to happen. I'm worried stiff . . ."

"Lizzie, I want you to talk to me about Karen. Is there something you can tell me? Something that will help me to handle her the right way?"

She considered his question a moment, while wrapping the fur more closely around her neck, for she shivered in the river blast. She gave a nervous jump as a tugboat shrieked. "Well, I don't know," she said uncertainly. "But she thinks you're a great fellow, an' you are, so help me God. I think so myself. You remember that time on the boat? Well, I says to her . . ."

"Tell me what *she* said to you."

"Well, she never used to be like . . . like most girls. And she was always gettin' into jams. You know men. Wants every-

thing right away. That Dick, for instance. Look the way he treated her, the louse. But that's how they are. No patience and no understandin'. But you're different. Jan's got understandin', that's what she told me. He ain't rushing me, she says. He's kind-like. And I says to her, then stick by him, I says . . ."

"That's wonderful of you, Lizzie. But go on and tell me what Karen said."

"She said she feels different, if you know what I mean. Always used to be jittery and upset, you know. Said she feels like she was settlin' down, kind of. Hard to explain. It's the way she feels inside, I guess."

"Wonderful, Lizzie! Wonderful!"

Her eyes were darting around. She seemed to freeze at the sight of a policeman over on the corner of Twenty-third Street and West. "I'm scared," she whispered. "I better beat it. You can't fool Kelly. He's too damn smart."

"Well, Lizzie, I feel a lot better now. But what are we going to do? We've got to keep in touch with each other."

"Lordy, I don't know," she said, trembling as she put her hand on his arm. "But you promise you'll keep mum, don't you, if anything should happen?"

"I promise. I swear."

"Good. I believe you."

"Lizzie! I have an idea. Suppose you drop me a card if there's anything you feel you want to tell me."

"A card!" She stared at him as though fearing he had gone out of his mind.

"Wait until you hear," he said. "Just write: *Greetings from Charlie*. Then give a date, and we'll meet here at eight o'clock. It will be dark. No one will see us."

She mulled it over. "Okay," she said. "I guess it's the best way. Yes, sure, dearie, I'll do that. But now I gotta run. Don't follow me. Stay right here until I'm off, and God bless you. Stand by Lizzie, and Lizzie will stand by you."

“I will. Goodnight, and thanks a million.”

She gave his hand a little squeeze, and after another wary glance around she hurried off on her wobbly heels, her face buried in Kelly's fur coat as she ran toward Twenty-third Street.

THE CHILLY NOVEMBER SPELL BROKE UNEXPECTEDLY, AND warm days were here again. But this was not the prickly warmth of Indian Summer. The air remained invigorating as bright sunshine poured down upon river and ships. A brisk wind whipped up snowy foam on the ocean-going tide.

Working on the open pier-end one forenoon Jan heard a dog's bark from out in the fairway. And there he saw little fluffy-tailed Tyra bounding about on the cabin roof of Nil's barge, which was being towed upstream by a shaggy-nosed tug. On deck was Nils himself, coiling a line. Jan shouted a hello to him, but Nils didn't hear. Tyra was frightfully busy directing the river traffic and bawling out the screaming gulls who wheeled in the sunlight above the craft.

In that forenoon two accidents struck on the pier. The first occurred aboard ship as an Italian was knocked over by a swinging draft and tumbled right into the hold. Luckily for him the hold was half-filled with cargo, so he didn't fall to the bottom and kill himself. Still, he was hurt badly enough, and the cry went out for the "ambulance." This is the long-shoremen's term for what they sometimes call the "fruit box,"

a large empty packing crate lowered into the hold when the cargo consists of many small objects which cannot be made into drafts. And when a longshoreman has been badly hurt down in the hold, or killed, he is taken up in this box. Hence its name. So the battered box arrived, and the unconscious Italian was placed in it, hoisted ashore and taken away in a real ambulance to St. Mary's Hospital. Another fellow was ordered into the hold to take the injured man's place. And the work proceeded as before.

The second accident happened to none other than Tony. A minor affair, however. Along the passageway of the pier runs a pair of tracks used for small, flat-topped freight carriers on which cargo is conveyed from one end of the pier to the other. Tony was standing on the tracks unloading one carrier, when a second carrier rolled up from behind, and his right leg caught between the two. But he only got a flesh wound, and after the pier doctor had brushed a little iodine on it and bandaged the leg Tony limped off. "Just goes to show what a lucky guy I am," he bragged, as he sat in the cafeteria at lunch.

"What you mean, lucky?" said Jan.

"Sure." And he elaborated on his fatalistic theory that every man must have a turn at an accident. Once he'd been struck, however, he could look forward to a long breathing spell. "Now maybe I'm safe for a year," Tony ended his spiel.

He was interrupted by old Pat Mulligan who pulled up a chair at the table. "You lads hear-rd the big news?" he asked importantly.

"News? . . ."

"I'm tellin' you." Pat rumpled his hair and fixed on them his keen Irish eyes. "Gr-reat things are goin' to happen, mark me word."

"Come on," said Jan. "What are you hinting at?"

"Hintin'? Listen, me boy, Pat Mulligan was never caught hintin' at nobody. He gives it to 'em straight. Sure, an' that's

been me habit ever since I was a wee lad in Donegal. I'm not hintin'. I'm tellin' you. Honest Per-rsson is out."

"What! . . ." Both Tony and Jan widened their eyes. "Out, you say?"

"Sure, and that's what I've hear-rd. There's been a lot o' tr-rouble among the so-called higher-ups. I'm not namin' names, as I mean to stay in good health and live for many a year. An' neither am I hintin' at anything that might have happened. Only, the name of Honest Per-rsson speaks for itself."

Tony dug his elbow into Jan's ribs.

Jan turned gravely to Pat. "You're sure?"

"I'm positively sure, me lad. You'll see in the mor-rnin'. Mark me wor-rd. There will be a new boss hiring you."

THE NEXT MORNING EVERYBODY IN THE SHAPE WAS JUMPY and alert. Someone whispered that Big Boss McCarthy was roaring like a bull in his pier office. What did this change of hiring Stevedore mean? What kind of man would the newcomer be? In the great half-circle of waiting longshoremen every eye sought the pier gates where the new Stevedore would soon appear.

There he came! A ripple ran through the bull line. No . . . nobody they knew. Had never seen him before. A few of the men had heard of him, however. McGrady. He was a lean, tough-looking hombre of forty, a quid of tobacco bulging under his cheek and a broken felt hat shoved onto the back of his head. He threw a searching glance around the lineup, then took his position in the center of the semicircle, while behind him a cowed timekeeper stood ready with pencil and checker list.

Every face turned somberly toward McGrady. He held their fate in his hands. And it dawned on them why a complete stranger had been ordered to take Honest Persson's place as hiring Stevedore. This McGrady had no old friends to favor. No milk of human kindness would be spilt. Not a man in the bull line felt safe, no matter how long he had worked on the



pier, and no matter how good his record or how great his longshoreman's skill. Watching tough McGrady even Jan lost his confidence, and his staunch position as one of a crack gang suddenly seemed most insecure. He thought of Karen. What would happen to her if he lost out?

McGrady spat on the ground, took a step forward and glared at the men. "Hold gang number one!" he roared.

A small body of men shambled up in front of the new Stevedore, and he bored his flinty eyes into each and every one of them. "You," he approved of one. And, "You," he selected another. But a third man he rejected with a contemptuous wave of his hand. "Get out!" he snapped. "Get the hell out of here!"

Fear and outrage stamped on his weatherbeaten face the longshoreman fell back. Why had he been rejected? . . . Had he squawked? Had he talked out of turn? The timekeeper was there with his list, and from time to time he gave McGrady some monosyllabic advice. Nervous tension ran high in the Shape.

"Hold gang number two."

Another group lumbered forward for inspection. The timekeeper nodded to McGrady. The whole gang passed, and the men hurried toward the gates with expressions of immense relief at having this ordeal behind them.

But the next gang fared less well. Two unfortunates were thrust back by McGrady's imperious hand-wave. And so it went. Gang after gang was called, and the desirables were picked—and they were not always the huskiest and most experienced men. By now it was clear to everyone that this was a grand shake-up. And if they had ever doubted it, every longshoreman in the Shape now found abundant proof that there were those among them who watched their every move and listened to every word they spoke, off duty and on.

McGrady called his gangs, hold gangs, dock and sailor gangs. Tony passed muster, and so did old Pat Mulligan.

“Dock gang number three!”

That was Jan’s gang, and he marched up to McGrady with his pals. The timekeeper whispered a quick word to the Boss, who eyed the men critically, then began to pick them one by one. The fellows at once stiffened and grew nervous. Such a thing had not happened to them for many years. This gang, as well as the others, had been used to work as a unit of regulars. But now their unit was broken up! And presently Jan met McGrady’s cold eyes, and the Stevedore made an indifferent gesture toward the crowds of *shenangoes* out on the fringe of the thinning Shape. “Get out of here!”

Jan just looked at him. It couldn’t be! . . . Must be a mistake. He’d been working here on this pier for twelve years, and had belonged to the same gang for over six! . . .

McGrady shoved his hat over on the back of his head and turned to the remaining few gangs. The number of cast-offs grew—a hundred or more anxious men nervously shifting on their feet and staring mutely at McGrady. Most of them had families to support, and where would they find work after having been rejected on the waterfront? They knew that if they did protest their last chance would be gone. If they kept silent they had always the hope of being picked as extras during the rush hours. Or deep in every heart lingered the hope that the tide would turn in their favor again. Perhaps McGrady would relent and they would be taken back after a few weeks.

Standing near a group of extras, Jan racked his brain. Why had he been turned down? What had he done? Could this be old McCarthy’s revenge for having had his offer of a foreman’s job refused? . . . Jan looked toward the clanging pier gates. Was it possible that he wouldn’t be working in there again. He felt lost and adrift. And Karen . . . What in God’s name would happen to her?

Yet in the group of rejected men one did cry out, a small middle-aged man known as Tom. Perhaps he was without hope and with nothing to lose, come what may. He shook his

fist and yelled a challenge to McGrady. "Bastard!" he cried. "I'll get even with you for this!"

McGrady did not even seem to hear him. Or was that cynical smile his reaction to the threat? He continued calling his gangs, picking some men and thrusting others back.

Tom's rage increased. His face was gray, his eyes burned. Again he raised his fist, and again he shouted his hatred for the new Stevedore. He was still the only one to voice a protest, however, for not even now did the others dare to side with him. Indeed, they turned their eyes away from him and shuffled off a few paces to make it clear to McGrady that they disowned Tom. They still clung to a hope.

Jan was dumbfounded at what had happened to him. Why had he been thrust out of his gang?

Squinting his eyes against the morning sun, McGrady passed by the few remaining groups of waiting men. He was only a yard away from Tom now, and suddenly he wheeled on the man and they confronted each other. Tom scowled. McGrady narrowed his eyes. He measured Tom up and down with a quick and contemptuous glance, then his fist shot out and caught Tom on the chin and felled him to the ground.

He threw out his hand at the scattered longshoremen who still clung to a slender hope. "That's all for today," he called, and stalked into the pier shed.

JAN REMAINED OUTSIDE THE GATES LONG AFTER THE NEW Stevedore had gone. He could hardly believe himself pushed out of his job. He had seen it happen to others time and again during his years on the waterfront, and he used to feel sorry for the poor devils—but never dreamed that one day it would be his own turn.

He looked around him. Most of the rejected longshoremen had scattered by now. Some were standing on the street corners, others ambling away down West Street where the morning rush of big trucks shook the cobblestone ground.

If he were out for good—what would he do about Karen?

He walked off slowly, for a fleet of teams crowded near the gates. One of the drivers hailed him and cracked his whip to attract attention, but Jan did not hear. He was trying to think what to do.

There ought to be a little left of the savings he'd put in the bank during the years when he was single and worked as a regular. Karen could hardly have used all the money. Still he thought that what she had used was well spent, considering the wonderful news Lizzie brought him that other night by the ferry house.

But when the savings were gone—then what? If a black

mark were put against his name on McGrady's hiring list it would be no use trying to get work at any of the other piers. You could never prove it, of course, but everyone knew that the Stevedores stuck together when it came to blacklisting a man.

The sun had risen higher in the sky behind the dingy warehouses and tenements of the waterfront. Now a golden light streamed into West Street. Jan saw another longshoreman standing near a pile of crates, blinking his eyes against the sun. Old Humpy. Jan greeted him. "No luck, huh?"

As the Irishman turned his head Jan saw that he was near the end of his rope. His face was flabby with worry, his eyes red-rimmed.

Humpy ogled him. "You?" he said. "And what's you doin' here?"

"Wasn't hired."

"Wasn't hired!" Humpy echoed him, unbelieving. Then he laughed, without mirth. "Joseph an' Mary, I'm gettin' good company, I am! You wasn't hired! . . . Jesus, I ain't been hired since I don't know when. Tell me," he cried in an outburst of despair, "tell me, how's a man supposed to live? Shouldn't there be a law? When a man's willing. When a man's beggin' them devils: Gimme a couple o' days. For the love o' Him who died on the cross, gimme a day's work. I got a bunch o' kids back home. I got a wife. I ask you, Jan—shouldn't there be a law sayin' they got no right to push a man back?"

Jan shook his head. He knew of no law. But while Humpy raved he felt that at last, after many years, he had come face to face with the truth about the waterfront. He'd been living in a fool's paradise of regular work. He ought to have known all along how uncertain was his existence. He ought to have known that losing favor with the Stevedore was all that was needed to push him out among the jobless and the horror that went with it. A law! . . . No, he knew of no law.

Humpy plucked him by the arm. "I'm askin' you a favor. Jan, I can't find the strength in me to go home alone this mornin'. I'm feelin' shaky. Come on with me an' talk to the wife. Explain to her it ain't my fault I get no work."

"Okay. Might as well. No use hanging around here." With another glance at the bustling pier he followed Humpy across the tracks, then up along one of the rubbishy side streets where many of the longshoremen live who work on the Chelsea docks.

A SWARM OF CHILDREN WAS PLAYING OUTSIDE THE RUN-down tenement where Humpy lived. The oldtimer led Jan past a couple of garbage cans, then into a muggy hallway. He lived on the first floor, and his wife must have seen him coming, for she pulled the door open before he had time to put his hand on the knob. There she faced him, a slatternly woman who might once have been a pretty Irish lass, and who even now in her decay retained a certain regularity of feature cruelly at odds with her worn countenance and graying tatters of hair. Her eyes were set in deep dark hollows.

"Ha, and so you're comin' back!" she scoffed. "To lay around on the sofa, I s'pose. You good-for-nothin' devil you, I'm sick o' havin' you around, so help me God!"

His face drooping, Humpy turned helplessly to Jan.

"Come, come," said Jan soothingly. "It isn't his fault he missed being hired. I was turned down myself today."

She eyed him silently. He was no bum, she could see that. A nice-looking man. Yet pent-up emotion was at work within her as she drew aside and allowed the two men to enter.

Jan took in the drab room. He looked at the three thin and undernourished children who had been playing on the floor, but now stared at him with round grave eyes. He had been in many a longshoreman's home, and they varied according to

the men and their circumstances. Some of the old Irish regulars had nice and respectable homes; their sons entered the police force, and their daughters worked as office girls in the city. Tony's home, too, was neat and orderly, with his strong-willed mother watching over her brood and snatching the wine jug from her easy-going husband when she thought he had bibbled enough.

And Jan had occasionally crossed the thresholds of men who worked less regularly and so were always hard up, but not in actual want. Their homes were cheerless and their children ragged and thin.

But because he had been a regular all these years he had never hobnobbed with fellows who were constantly on the fringe of the Shape. Not that he was stuck-up in the least, but it was natural that the men who worked together also chummed together. So this was really his first visit to a cast-off from the docks.

Humpy's wife closed the door and came into the room, her skinny blue-mottled arms folded tensely in front. She glowered at Jan. "You a pal of his?"

"Sure. Know each other since way back."

"You don't look like you got nothin' to grouse about," she snapped. "Why is it me husband can't find a day's work?"

"Well . . . it's a shame. That's the way it is down there."

She turned fiercely on Humpy who was nervously rubbing his hands. "I curse the day I married you!" she railed at him. "A man what can't support his own family. Ha! If you had any guts left in you I'm sure you'd be hired."

"That isn't fair," Jan protested. "There are too many of us down at the docks. There just isn't work enough to go around. Some are hired, some not. The Stevedore can do what he likes."

"Sure, an' I've been tellin' you," Humpy chimed in, his eyes pleading with her. "That's the way it is. What can I do? I'm standing in that Shape every mornin' and noon, come rain or



shine. Now, ain't that the truth, Jan? You ever seen me missing the call?"

"Never. You're there every time the Stevedore blows his whistle."

"S'help me God! And never once he picks me no more," Humpty said, swallowing thickly. "Got somethin' against me, I guess. Don't know what. I'm sure I always used to put in a good day's work. An' I was never one to gaff. What's there a man can do?"

"What am I to do?" his wife echoed him in a quivering voice. Then she laughed harshly. "Oh, yes, I know . . . Run to the Sisters again. Begging 'em for a couple o' dollars! Charity! Charity! That's all there's left for us. Takes the pride out of a body, I tell you! I wish I was dead and buried six feet underground."

A little freckled, red-headed boy of twelve came in from the street, halting inside the door, abashed. His mother turned to him. "Mickey, you stay here an' take care o' the kids. I'll be back in half an hour."

"Where you goin'?" Humpty asked timidly.

"Goin'? . . . To the Sisters, of course!" she flung at him, wrapping a shawl around her shoulders. "You got to ask? Seems you ought to know by this time. What's there for the children to eat?"

She left the room and banged the door shut after her. Humpty shuffled over to the table and slumped down in a chair, staring wretchedly before him. Jan dug into his trouser pocket and fished up a dollar bill. "It isn't much," he said as he shoved the bill across to Humpty. "It's all I got just now."

He picked up his hat. "Well, Humpty. I don't know what to say. It's all a big problem, and I don't know the answer. But try to buck up."

He stepped to the door. As he put his hand on the knob he looked back and saw Humpty bent forward across the table, his face buried in the crook of his elbow.

JAN DIDN'T FEEL HE COULD GO HOME AND TELL KAREN ABOUT this unexpected blow, so he wandered about the docks. It was a day off, all right, but could hardly be called a day of rest. He would a thousand times more prefer to be in the hold stowing flour sacks, or carrying on his back sugar sacks weighing 300 pounds apiece.

So this was how a man felt when pushed on the outside, and others were at work! Lost and aimless and adrift. And he'd only had a few hours of it so far. How would he feel before the day was over? Or the week?

He walked out on the wooden pier behind Washington Market and stood watching the stream where busy craft passed, and steam and smoke were blown with the wind. The *Volendam* was tying up over at the Holland-America Line. Whistles screamed. Wheeling seagulls filled the autumnal air with their cries.

Why had he been dropped from his gang? He didn't think it could be McCarthy's doing, after all. The old fellow was a tough devil at times, but not mean. Instead another picture formed itself in Jan's mind.—He'd talked to Freddie Reed in

public a couple of times lately, and Freddie was at war both with the shipowners and the AFL union officials. . . .

He felt sure he'd hit the right track now. Someone had seen him talking to Freddie, and reported him to the union heads. Secret word had been passed to the new Stevedore: Turn this fellow down in the Shape. It couldn't be proved, of course. Nobody could ever prove these things. But everybody knew there was a great deal of good understanding between those who owned the ships and those who ruled the union. And to hell with the men. Let them pay dues.

Freddie was right. There should be a clean-up of the mess. And if little Freddie wasn't scared, Jan felt he could take it on the chin. Casting about in his mind he found several ways that promised an escape from the trap. He thought of that nice old Captain Wallace on the fire boat. Jan had done him a small favor once a few years ago. Nothing much. Just given him a hand turning a garage into a work shop where the Captain could spend his leisure hours building ship models. "Jan, why do you hang about the docks?" Wallace had said. "A fellow like you. Why don't you get a job with the pilots, or put in an application with the Coast Guard, or the fire boat department?"

Jan had not paid much attention then, for he was working regularly, and was single. And he planned to go back to Bohemia for that matter. But now everything had changed. He decided to look up Captain Wallace at once.

He flicked a glance toward the pier from where he heard the yells of foremen amid the general uproar of cargo discharge. The punks! Thought they had trapped him, did they! By Jesus, he was not one to stay licked!

He had luck. He saw the Captain before the day was over. Wallace remembered him, and they had a long talk which ended with the Captain promising to do all he could for Jan. And he thought the prospects for a job were good, if only Jan

would be patient. For such matters always required a little time.

So Jan felt quite elated on his way home. Things would work out for him, and now since he'd seen how treacherous they were here on the waterfront he was glad to turn his back on it for good. He would still be working on the river—more than ever, in fact.

He said nothing to Karen of what had happened. The following morning he left the house at the usual time, to make her think he was going down to the pier. He spent the day walking along the waterfront, and sat in a cafeteria for a few hours. Then after the five o'clock whistles had blown on the docks, he went home.

But on Saturday he was three days short in his pay envelope. He told Karen the money had been used for his union dues, but offered to get what more she needed from the bank. She blushed. "Oh, I can go myself," she said quickly, bending over a cooking pot on the stove.

He thought she acted strange, but paid slight attention to it. She had her peculiar moods, and he wasn't going to let anything upset him. If he could only hold on awhile, he'd be out of this scrape. But he pitied poor suckers like Humpy and the rest. No way out for them.

And because he saw a way of escape he felt calm enough over the weekend. On Monday morning a cussed idea strayed into his mind. Suppose he went down and stood in the Shape, just for the hell of it. He would stand there independently with his hands in his pockets and look McGrady in the eye and grin at him.

So he did. And it gave him a queer feeling to shape up again, so completely had he called this waterfront chapter to a close. He watched McGrady summon his gangs—hold gangs, sailor gangs and dock gangs. And he saw his pals lumber forward for inspection, then continue toward the gates.

And with a catch at his throat he heard his old gang being

called. The little group detached itself from the Shape. But something seemed to be amiss, for he noticed a quick exchange of words between the timekeeper and the Stevedore. Then—what was this! . . . Tobacco-chewing McGrady swung around and flung out his finger at him. "You!" he growled. "Come on, you!"

Jan was completely taken by surprise. And although his dumbfounded mind protested feebly, he found himself carried forward by his feet which acted out of long habit; he marched up to the hated McGrady and halted right in front of him.

"Okay," said the Stevedore, knocking his battered hat over on his ear. "Okay. Get in." The timekeeper made a mark on his pad, and Jan found himself walking into the pier shed with his gang!

A few minutes later he was at work again, and nobody said a word about his absence. His pals said nothing. And when McGrady came around, he too acted as if nothing out of the ordinary had taken place. After an hour or so, when in the full swing of unloading, Jan found it difficult to believe he had been on the outside at all.

Yet he knew what he knew. This is how they did it when they wanted to scare the life out of a man who had not toed the straight line. If they valued him too much to drop him for good they gave him a gentle hint and let him feel what it was like not to be hired. After a dose of that—a week or a month—most of the poor devils were softened up properly not to make another mistake.

Only—now Jan felt more defiant than ever before. As soon as he saw Freddie Reed he'd walk over to him and cry: "Hello, pal!"

A FEW MORE DAYS OF THIS FINE AUTUMN WEATHER, WITH cool mornings, sunshine and a glittering stream. Then raw cold set in. Then a storm blew up. Flood and a sixty-mile wind took a heavy toll along the Atlantic seaboard. Chill rain lashed at docks and black-hulled ships, spume-buried barges, tugs and other river craft, and at the gray tide which now rolled downstream toward the bay and the sea, and seven hours later flowed upstream again.

The first storm of the winter season howled across the waterfront, whistled in the riggings of ships and drove the slanting rain along West Street with its ever-rumbling trucks. The rain beat against the pier walls and the huge gates, and drenched the teamsters arriving with freight. And at eight in the raw morning the rain was pouring down on the four hundred men in the Shape, hunched-up and shivering in their wait for the Stevedore.

Within a short while Jan and every other man in the Shape was drenched to the skin. Just before eight McGrady appeared in heavy raincoat and sou'wester and began to muster his gangs, his voice raised above the uproar and the wind. And meanwhile the rain washed down on the Shapes gathered outside the other piers: Atlantic Transport Line, White Stars, Red Star on the uptown side; and southward: the French Line, Cunard, Morgan, and the intercoastal and coastwise lines and

fruit shippers carrying sugar and bananas from the Gulf. And the rain descended on the men across the river, outside the Hoboken piers: the United States Line, Munson, Hölland-America, Lamport and Holt. Likewise on the East River longshoremen, and on the men along the vast Brooklyn waterfront—some forty to fifty thousand longshoremen standing under the bare sky this morning, as they had done on all rainy mornings and cold and snowy mornings as long as they could recall.

"You!" McGrady shouted. "You! an' you!"

After the shaping-up was over Jan scampered into the pier with the other men, all of them soggy and chilled. Their clothes would have to dry on them while they worked. Outside the gates a hundred rejected extras scattered in the morning rain, having been drenched to no purpose, yet hoping there would be a chance for them in the one o'clock Shape.

And now word spread along the waterfront that little Freddie Reed was making a last stand for the things he had championed so long. He adopted new tactics this time. Last spring he had tried to arouse the longshoremen to a protest against all the waterfront abuses, including the old hiring system and the kickback. But now he battered home at one single point. Now his cry was: "Hiring halls!"

"Hiring halls for you men!" he cried.

He had kept in the background during the last few months, because of his fear that his constantly reiterated plea would become monotonous, and that the men would grow weary of him. And so he had decided to wait for help from the natural elements themselves. What he could not accomplish on his own—perhaps it could be achieved if he allied himself with the rain and the storm. And now as the cold rain drenched the men and they shivered in the blast, now Freddie raised his voice once more: "Hiring halls! Hiring halls for you men!"

Yet he pleaded in vain. The longshoremen were cowed by the new Stevedore, and fearful of the powers behind him,

those who ran the ILA and those who owned the ships. The enemy was stronger than all of the fifty thousand longshoremen combined—stronger than they and Freddie and the elements. The men had nothing to back them but the few dollars earned each day, and it required courage superhuman to throw that little away when cold rains were pouring down, a storm shook the sky, and snow and winter were ahead.

Freddie called another rank-and-file meeting in Al's speak-easy. But this time not a single one of the regulars showed up. Of shaggy figures there were plenty in Al's joint that night, but except for the usual handful of underworld characters, they were all embittered cast-offs, city drifters and *shenangoes*, the flotsam of the waterfront.

On coming through the gates one night after having worked overtime, Jan spied Freddie Reed on the other side of the street. Freddie looked grave. He was dressed in his baggy tweed suit, and his scraggly neck stuck out of a clean white collar. Jan stepped over to him. "Hello, Freddie," he said. "What's doing tonight?"

"Nothing much," Freddie said gloomily. "Nothing at all, in fact."

"Working—no?"

"Got fired. The bastards found out about me."

"Did, eh? Too bad. Yeah, I was afraid they would."

"Oh, well," said Freddie with a grim smile. "I'm just a wash-out. A good-for-nothing, I guess."

Jan frowned. "Which way are you going? I'm on my way home."

"I'll walk a couple of blocks with you, if you don't mind."

"Okay. Why not come along home and have a bite to eat?"

"Thanks, Jan. But I don't know if I should impose on you."

"What are you talking about? Freddie, come on."

They proceeded down murky West Street where here and there a solitary lamp threw a narrow circle of light on the



ground. The rain had stopped, but a rough wind howled. Tugs barked fitfully in the stream. Storm-torn clouds passed like monster birds across the sky, while the stars danced and flickered, were blotted out and then reappeared.

Talking as they went the two men crossed the termination of neon-lit Fourteenth Street. In the headlight flash of a passing automobile Jan saw two dark figures slip behind a lunch wagon in the open lot in front of the Cunard piers. But he paid no attention, assuming them to be two longshoremen taking a short-cut home.

"So you had quite a shake-up at the pier," Freddie said.

"Shake-up is right," Jan replied, without mentioning the warning given him by the Stevedore.

Freddie made an ironical comment about the way things were run along the waterfront, but his voice was lost in the uproarious passing of a truck hurtling out of the dark. Jan cocked his ear at a whistle a few blocks behind them. "What was that?" he said. "Did you hear?"

"A cop?"

"Didn't sound like it." He turned around, but no one there. The dock street was empty. The truck had rumbled off into the night, and now only the shrieking wind could be heard.

They continued on their way. Freddie was talking. "Makes you feel pretty ashamed to be an American sometimes," he said. "Here's the greatest port in the world—and look at it! What have we to be so proud of? Treating our men worse than cattle. In other ports all over the world the authorities have done away with evils we've tolerated a hundred years. In Barcelona, Lisbon, Rotterdam, London, Liverpool—everywhere the shipping companies take care of their men. In Antwerp the longshoremen live in the suburbs and have little gardens to work in when they're not at the docks. In Amsterdam they've built hiring halls where the men can stay when it rains. In Gothenburg, Belfast—everywhere the same. But here . . ."

He interrupted himself, put his hand on Jan's arm and raised his head, listening. From a lighted window in one of the side streets drifted fragments of radio music, the strains from a violin and the accompaniment of a piano. "Shubert . . . Listen to that violin. My mother was like that. Sweet . . . this was her favorite piece. I used to play the violin and mother accompanied me."

He stood motionless under the lamp, absorbed in the music which sometimes was entirely lost in the wind. The violin sang gently, pausing to let the piano alone carry on, then once more speaking to Freddie like an urgent voice from his boyhood.

He listened to the end. Then, "Come on," he said, pulling Jan along with him. He walked in silence now. They had left the prison-like structure of the Sailors' Home behind them when Jan suggested they cut down through Bethune Street and Bleecker. But on rounding the corner they stopped, for there again that sharp whistle shrilled. Right up the street this time. "What the hell is it?" said Jan. He sounded worried now.

"Be hanged if I know," Freddie replied, squinting into the dark.

They started off. Suddenly, out of the inky-black shadows of the house wall, there appeared the bulky figure of a man. Jan happened to be a pace or two ahead of Freddie, and in a lightning-short moment he saw the man swing a club. But he also heard a shout from a second man, invisible in the dark: "The other guy! *The little guy!*" Then the club whizzed down, and a searing pain cut through the top of Jan's head. He floundered and fell against the wall, his body temporarily paralyzed. Yet his mind was clear. The goons were attacking Freddie now. A short scuffle on the sidewalk. A dull thud and a groan. Freddie was lying on the ground, with the two dark figures raining blows on him. He cried out. He called for help. Jan made a desperate effort to straighten up, but his limbs refused to obey him. His head ached. . . . Then the numbness passed, and bounding forward he hurled himself on the

nearest one of the hoodlums, threw his arms around him from behind, grabbed the club from him and struck him a blow on the ear. The fellow staggered, his raised hands protecting his head. The other thug backed away from Freddie's prostrate body, and in the light from the street lamp Jan recognized his face and his little bright eyes.—The one from Al's speakeasy. The thug quickly slipped into the shadows of the wall. The other hoodlum, too, disappeared, and they were heard running off in the night, their footsteps lost in the storm blast.

Freddie was trying to get up, but sank on his knees, his head drooping, one hand on the ground. Jan bent over him. Freddie moaned softly. Blood oozed from his mouth.

Glancing around him in the dark Jan wondered what he ought to do. The stooped figure of a laborer passed under the corner street lamp, then ambled off along lonely West Street. Jan did not call him, for the fellow didn't seem like one who would be of much help.

Freddie groped for his arm. Jan helped him to rise. Freddie swayed and stumbled, but was able to stand. He got out his handkerchief and dabbed at the blood running from his mouth. His legs buckled under him. Jan held him up. "How do you feel?" he said. "The bastards! . . ."

"Not so hot."

Jan took a better grip of his arm, and with an effort Freddie pulled himself together. "Let's get over to the Home," he mumbled. "They know me there."

The Sailors' Home was only a block away, and Jan thought that taking Freddie there might be the best thing. He could lie down for awhile anyway. "All right," he said. "Come on, Freddie. Here now. I've got a good hold of you. Think you can make it?"

They staggered off. Reaching the corner they braced themselves against the blast. A short way down West Street lights were gleaming in the reading room windows of the Sailors' Home.

THE SEAMEN'S INSTITUTE, TO USE ITS PROPER NAME, WAS a five-story building of weathered brick on the corner of Jane Street and thunderous West, and overlooking the river and the Hoboken piers. Surmounted by a tower, green with age, the forbidding structure resembled a prison more than a refuge for seafaring folk. On the first floor was a bleak reading room in which, during harsh weather, a handful of derelicts would seek shelter under the pretense that they were seamen out of a job. Or the chairs in front of the magazine-littered tables would be occupied by a few dozing longshoremen rejected in the Shape and preferring the company of their comrades in misfortune to going home to face the reproachful eyes of their poverty-harried wives.

On reaching the Institute Jan and Freddie were hailed by three drunken seamen huddled near the wall and mingling their raucous voices with the moaning of the wind. They cursed and shouted, and one of them swung a fist at Jan, but lost his balance and dropped into the gutter where he continued his slobbery protest against this unspeakable universe into which he had been ushered while still a helpless babe.

Getting a good hold on Freddie's arm Jan climbed the flight of stone steps, flanked by two pale globular lamps. Inside the

door was a dusty booth, and behind the iron-grilled window, like a lean bird in a cage, sat a clerk whose resentful eyes peered at Jan from shadowy pits.

"One," said Jan, pushing thirty-five cents through the narrow opening in the grill.

The fellow threw out a key with a wooden plaque attached to it. Eyeing Freddie's blood-smeared face he didn't seem interested in the least, for bloody faces were an all too common sight here. From his nightly position in the booth the clerk was accustomed to all kinds of misshapen countenances, compared to which Freddie's face looked like that of a Sunday school boy.

A cheerful elevator boy took them up to the second floor in the old-fashioned lift. "Wowie!" he said to Freddie. "Hope you smacked the other guy a good one."

Freddie managed a smile. When the elevator stopped he followed Jan out and they started to look for his room, the numbers painted on the steel doors that stretched row upon row, like cell doors in a prison. The air was acrid with the stench from the adjoining lavatory.

"Twenty-seven," said Jan. "Here we are." He pushed the key into the lock, and here was the room—a damp narrow cell with ceiling, walls and floor of cement. There was a steel bed and a steel chair. A narrow window offered a view of the river. The blurred green starboard light of a tug moved out there in the dark. Mastlights bobbed in the storm.

Supporting himself against the jamb while he viewed the cell, Freddie struck out his hand and spoke in a voice of mock grandeur: "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree."

"What's the matter?" said Jan. "Going nuts?"

Freddie touched the side of his head. "Maybe that's it," he said with a groan. Entering the cell he flopped down on the cot and rolled over on his back. "Those criminals knocked all my screws loose."

"Same here," Jan muttered, cautiously passing his hand across the top of his skull. "I got a bump here as big as an egg. I'll remember that fellow, you bet your life."

Freddie grimaced with pain. "Jan, do me a favor," he said, shifting his position on the cot. "Get me a couple of paper towels from the wash room. Soak 'em in a little water, eh."

"Okay . . ." Jan stepped outside. Coming back he helped Freddie wash the clotted blood off his face.

"Good boy," Freddie said. "Thanks, Jan. That's fine. . . . Those two guys—I'd like to know whom they're working for—the shipowners or the AFL."

"What's the difference?" said Jan.

"Ought to be some."

Freddie closed his eyes. From a storm-battered ship out at sea came a lugubrious call which drifted echoing across the dark waterfront. He looked up at Jan. "Stay a while," he said. "How about it? Or do you have to go home right away?"

"Hell, no. I'll stay."

"That's a pal. I feel lonesome tonight." He loosened the collar at his neck. It was stained with blackened blood.

Jan sat down on the chair. A bunch of sailors were yelling out in the corridor. A steel door slammed. Outside the window the blast moaned, a melancholy, mournful sound. Besieging night pressed close.

Freddie once more put his lean hand to his head. "Don't think they managed to crack it," he muttered. "Dad always claimed I was the most thick-headed member of the family."

"Wipe your nose," said Jan. "It's bleeding again."

"Oh, is it?" He passed a paper wad across his upper lip. "How's that?"

"Okay. Be still now."

Freddie sighed. "Well, well . . . maybe it's just evolution."

"It's what?"

"Evolution," Freddie repeated, a glint in his somber eye. "The rise from jungle individualism to a society of cooperating

members. From colloidal protoplasm all the way up the scale . . . the ocean, the slimy beach, crawling reptiles, mammals and primitive man. Another push and we've reached the age of labor unions. We're now in the skull-cracking phase. The hardest heads survive. Maybe I'm not a misfit after all."

"You sound drunk," said Jan.

"Swell ideal!" Freddie cried and pointed a bony finger. "Jan, I want to get drunk tonight. Drown my misery in gin. Hootch, anyway. What do you say?"

"It's up to you."

"Fine." He fished out a few crumpled dollar bills from his trouser pocket. "Here. It's all I have. Get us a bottle of booze. Get me something to eat too, will you? A sandwich, or whatever they have. And pay that bird down there for two nights. Then I'm all set. I dote on security."

"Okay," said Jan. "But keep your money. And take it easy now. I'll be back in a jiffy."

"That's the boy. A nice stiff drink will do me a hell of a lot of good."

Jan soon returned with both liquor and food. He also brought a bottle of milk. Freddie chuckled. "Want me to drink that stuff?"

"Naw—it's just a decoration."

Having uncorked the liquor bottle Freddie sniffed the contents and grimaced. "Well, as long as no matches are lit."

"Listen! I paid for good stuff."

"It's okay. Don't get excited." He put the bottle to his mouth and gulped. "Jesus," he gasped, "it's plain dynamite! Well, here goes . . ." He took another gulp, and one more. Then, coughing, he lay back on the pillow. "Once you get it down your throat it's all right." He stroked his chest and stomach and lay with his eyes closed, a glow spreading across his battered face.

Standing by the window-slit Jan gazed into the night. Over

in Hoboken, high on the jutting promontory of Castle Point, Stevens Institute loomed black against the saturnine sky. Below, on the shadow-haunted shore, was a phantasmagoria of spars, derricks and booms, like black fingers pointing accusation at the heavenly ruler of these storm-racked domains. The river teemed with activity in spite of the rough weather and the late hour. Sable craft came and went like nocturnal beings in a world removed from the prosaic everyday ushered in each dawn by a yelling Stevedore. Lights gleamed mysteriously. Ruby, emerald, golden and white. And the hoarse signals of ships were like the lowing of sea cattle herded by the watchhounds of the stream, the tugs.

At a sound from behind him on the steel bed, Jan turned around. His scrawny New England friend was gulping down more hootch. He nearly choked, then passed the bottle. "Have a swig," he said, coughing. "It's raw, but it gives you a lift."

"Well, I don't know . . ."

"Listen here!" Freddie protested, blinking at Jan with watering eyes. "Thought you said you'd keep me company tonight?"

"Okay, okay." Having passed his palm across the bottle mouth Jan took a sizable drink. Like Freddie, he coughed and his eyes filled with tears. "Christ! It flays my insides!" he growled.

Freddie rolled his head on the pillow. There were big lumps on his forehead, his jaw was swollen and his nose a shapeless lump, but the liquor relaxed him. "Jan, let's talk," he said. "Tell you something—I liked you from the first. Said to myself, there's a guy I want to know."

"You flatter me," said Jan. "Why didn't you speak up long ago? Would of asked you over to my house."

"Oh . . . always afraid to impose. It's a damn way to be though. Makes a guy lonely." He reached for the bottle and drank. "Jan," he sputtered, his eyes blood-shot. "Ever been lonely?"

"Sure . . ."



"I mean lonely as hell." Leaning forward and grabbing Jan's arm with his lean, sinewy hand, and fixing him with his eye, he quoted:

*O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been  
Alone on a wide, wide sea:  
So lonely 'twas, that God Himself  
Scarce seemed there to be.*

Then, sinking back on the pillow, he stared silently at the cement ceiling. A hush followed. Only the wind was howling outside and shaking the window with a fury as though an unbidden guest tried to enter the cell by force. A river craft belled mournfully. Lone sounds drew in from the sea. Jan thought Freddie looked smaller and more frail than ever, in his rumpled tweed and his thin neck sticking out of the blood-stained collar.

"Let's talk!" Freddie cried drunkenly. "Away perfidious thoughts that haunt my vulnerable mind! O Wedding-Guest, let's talk!"

"I'm here, Freddie. Talk all you want."

"All I want, eh! All right. I'll speak winged words." And rising on his elbow he flung out his hand at some imaginary antagonist. His watery eyes burned. "You can put me in jail!" he orated. "But you cannot give me narrower quarters than as a seaman I've always had. You can't give me coarser food than I've always eaten. You can't make me lonelier than I've always been.—Now, who said that, Jan? You're a smart guy. *Répondez, s'il vous plait.*"

"Sounds like Jesus Christ."

Freddie's eyes glittered. "Pretty good! Pretty good! Jan, you're a true *homme d'esprit*. But it was Andrew Furuseth. That's what he told the swine when they wanted to put him in jail because he stood up for the seamen in 'Frisco."

He reached for the hootch, gulped, passed the bottle to Jan

and watched him drink. "Let's talk," he said fiercely, his beaten face flushed, his eyes afire. "O Wedding-Guest, let's talk!"

"Go ahead. I'm here."

Sputtering, he again rose on his elbow: "All right, then let's talk about the perfidious shipowners. You know what the law says? How much d'you think they got to spend on grub for each member o' the crew?—Thirty-eight cents a day!"

Jan blinked sleepily. The hootch scorched his belly.

"I'm telling you the truth," Freddie rambled on. "I've sailed on the wide, wide sea myself, so help me God! Jan—want to hear a fairy-tale? This is a wonderful night for fairy-tales, don't you think? It's so damn cozy in here, and we've got plenty of booze. And there's a storm over Jersey." He pointed his finger again:

*Now listen to me, thou Wedding-Guest.  
Thou cannot choose but hear.  
Listen to this ancient man,  
This bright-eyed Mariner.*

"You are drunk," said Jan, and yawned and rumbled his hair.

"So are you. Listen—I'll tell you a story called Mail Subsidy. It's like hocus-pocus, abracadabra."

"The hell with it."

"That's what I say. *Ecrasez l'infame!* Hand me the booze. That's a good boy. Have some? . . . Jan, we're modern men with sensitively attuned nerves an' all sorts of aspirations an' cruel awareness. Martyrdom of *Homo Sapiens*. We need hootch, Jan. It's modern man's best friend."

Jan's head drooped. "A won'erful thing—friend," he slurred, hiccuping. "Sure's man's best friend."

"I like girls better," said Freddie belligerently, his hand clutching the bottle neck. "Jan, d'you like girls? . . . I do. Crazy about 'em. But nobody loves me."

Jan merely moaned, his body swaying. His eyelids were leaden. But from time to time he screwed up his eyes and stared hard at his friend. He stared at the rattling window. The storm howled out there.

Freddie shook his fist at the night. "Hence! . . . Fall back, thou fiend! Alone . . . lone, lone is Man's beleaguered soul! . . ."

He fell back on the cot, and his voice sank to a monotone. "Jan . . . heard that violin, didn't you? Just like my mother . . . a sweet old lady she was . . . Now, listen! Here I'm talking about her in the past tense, an' she's still alive. It's the hootch, or maybe it's because I'm dead to 'em—to dad anyway. I'm getting all mixed up."

"I've got to go home," said Jan, calling on his reserves and jerking up his head. He floundered to his feet and stood with his hand against the wall, his black hair tumbling over his brow. Staggering to the bed he bent over Freddie and pulled the blanket over him. "Go to sleep. See you in th' morning."

Freddie's strong fingers closed around Jan's wrist with an iron grip. "Stay awhile," he begged. "I'm alone . . ."

Jan steadied himself against the bed. From out in the night came a melancholy call. The window shook imperiously. "I got to go home," he said. "Got to go home."

Freddie's grip relaxed. And it seemed as if the drunken spell passed from him. His eyes were somber, grave and luminous. In spite of the bumps on his face and the swellings—peace settled on his countenance. "You heard that violin," he murmured. "Sweet, wasn't it?"

"See you in the mornin'," said Jan, hiccuping. "Better sleep now. Sleep'll do you good."

Freddie gazed at him gratefully. "Jan, you're a pal. Glad we got together at last. An' thanks for everything . . . thanks . . ." His face suddenly twitched. He closed his eyes and seemed to drop into bottomless sleep.

Jan stood for another moment looking down at Freddie's bruised countenance. Then he tucked the blanket around him as well as he could, fumbled for the electric switch, put out the light and staggered to the door, closing it behind him as softly as he could, so as not to wake his sleeping friend.

THE THREE DRUNKEN SAILORS WERE STILL CURSING THE storm-blast as Jan left the Home and stumbled into the street. The fellow who swung at him a few hours ago now lunged forward again—and missed. This time Jan himself swung a fist. And he, too, missed. So he and his antagonist lost interest in each other, and Jan started on a zigzag course along windy West, the street dreary and black since prohibition had closed all the snug waterside bars. Jan resented that. He'd not given the matter much thought before, but the hootch raised his ire that such things should be. "Goddamned fools!" he muttered at the howling night, as if there behind the blast lurked the evil genius which had substituted hootch for good whisky, and blotted out the friendly saloons.

The cold wind sobered him up a bit, and he began to worry. It was past midnight now. What would Karen say? Damn that hootch! Plain good whisky would never have knocked him this groggy. Maybe he ought to find Nils' barge and sleep in his cabin tonight? But, no, that wouldn't do. Karen would be worried sick if he didn't come home. And besides, the barge might not be in.

He'd have to face the music. Couldn't be helped. He shook his fist at a barking tug in the stream. "Shut up! . . ." But

there it blew once more: Boo-o-o-o-o-o-o! Like it had a belly-ache or something. And here came one of those trucks, raising a racket like Judgment Day. "Shut up!" he cried as the shadowy bulk thundered by him across the cobblestones. A hell of a lot of noise! A fellow couldn't think.

He turned up his collar against the wind and held on to a lamppost to get his bearings. "Alone, alone," he repeated Freddie's words. His head spun. And now a whole fleet of black trucks roared out of the night, but he couldn't get up enough resentment to denounce them. He let them pass. Lifting his eyes to the heavens he saw cold white stars scramble off behind the sooty clouds. Okay. Scram! Who wanted to have truck with stars, anyhow!

"Alone . . ."

He peered across the street. That red lantern over there on the dock? . . . Yes, sure. Must be the coal barge. Burns Brothers, or something. Then he better turn left into the next side street. Christ, he felt awful! His head splitting. Damn the hootch! Or maybe it was that blow from the blackjack. He put his hand to his skull. The spot was tender and raw, the bump big as an egg.

Leaving the safety of the lamppost he launched into the dark sea of night again, struggling to keep an even keel, the blast pushing him, flapping his coat and threatening to blow him into the gutter. Alone . . .

He reached the house. Having opened the door without noise, as he thought, he maneuvered into the hall and stood with his back against the jamb. His plan was to sneak to his room and get in bed before Karen discovered him. He felt confident that if he could only manage that much, he would also manage the rest.

But Karen dashed his hopes by coming to the door of her room. There she stood in the warm lamplight, looking into the hall. "Jan, is that you?" she called.

"Yes," he said, trying to give that one word correct and sober intonation. He might still fool her.

"What happened?" she said anxiously.

"Nothing," he declared, gazing steadily at her and still pinning a great deal of hope on correct pronunciation.

"You scare me!" she said. "Jan, say something. You . . . you look so strange."

"Me! . . ." He laughed at the idea. Him look strange! Now why? He was standing here—and what was strange in that. Something told him the game was up, however. Yet he would try once more. If he could only walk straight from here and into his room, he'd be all right.

He tried. He took a step or two.

"You're drunk!" Karen cried. "That's what it is!"

"Aw, what's the use!" He gave up. He relaxed and slumped. "Sure, I'm drunk," he defied her. "Can't a man take a drink without having all sorts o' people bothering him?"

She regarded him in silence for a moment. Then, "I think you better go in and lie down," she said softly, taking him by the arm to steady him. "Can you make it?"

"I don't need any help," he retorted irritably. "Can manage damn well by myself." And pulling loose from her he exerted himself to navigate with dignity, advancing slowly along the hall and through the open door. With a groan of relief he flopped on the bed.

"Where's your hat?" asked Karen, who had followed him.

"Hat! . . ." Raising his hand he was startled to find that he had no hat. "That's peculiar," he growled. "Must've lost it somehow." He cleared his throat and blinked, embarrassed, unaware that Karen's lips were twitching with suppressed laughter. "Damn queer," he said and wrinkled his brow, glancing about as if he expected to find his lost hat on a peg in the air.

"Tell me, Jan, where in the world have you been?" Karen asked, still suppressing her mirth.

"Been," he mumbled. "Oh . . . a friend o' mine . . ."

Suddenly bursting into laughter she came and sat beside him on the bed and put her arms around him. "You're a dear," she said, pushing his tumbling hair from his brow. "Jan, you look so funny. I've never seen you like this."

He was too startled to answer, and didn't yet believe her to be serious. Maybe these were just sardonic preliminaries before hell broke loose.

But the hand that stroked his cheek was too tender to bode any ill. "You really mean it?" he blurted. "You're not sore, honestly?"

She put her cheek against his for a fleeting moment. "Jan, my love. So you're human, after all."

He almost sobered up completely, and gaped at her. "What . . ."

"My man must have a few faults."

He continued staring at her. "Jesus, I don't get women, so help me! Here I've almost broken my neck trying to please you. An' all along, all I needed to do was to get drunk."

"You don't quite understand," she said with a smile. "But we won't argue—not tonight, anyway. Lie down and go to sleep now."

His eyes followed her as she stepped to the door, still smiling. Jesus Christ! . . . What a girl!



THE NEXT MORNING JAN STOOD IN THE SHAPE WITH A terrific hangover as tobacco-chewing McGrady called the gangs. The storm had died down during the night. Now neither rain nor wind, only a gray sky. Only a gray river. And gray piers. Fleets of battered trucks and snorting horse teams massed outside the gates. Cargo piling up. A large freighter waiting in the slip.

Every man on the pier spent a busy forenoon while the loading of the ship got under way. Jan had not much time to think of his aching head, or of the previous night at the Sailors' Home. But as soon as the noon whistle shrieked he hurried out the gates and down West Street to see how Freddie was feeling today.

When he reached the Home he at once found himself drawn into a sequence of nightmarish events. "Here he is!" crowed that lean and hollow-eyed bird in his grilled booth. "Ho-ho! That's the man!"

And before Jan knew what was meant—here two chunky-jowled cops grabbed him and started to bulldoze him. One was a young cop and the other a grizzled sergeant who kept shoving his club into Jan's ribs and bawling at him. And from all this Jan learned that Freddie was dead. His body had been

discovered only a short while ago, when an attendant broke into the cell because Freddie had failed to respond to the man's pounding on the door.

Jan was stunned. After the cops had written down his name and address and other particulars, they took him upstairs to the cell. And there Freddie lay as Jan had left him last night, with an expression of peace on his battered face, as if he were not dead but merely asleep. On the cement floor beside the bed stood the empty hootch bottle, peculiarly conspicuous in the bleak daylight dribbling through the window slit. And there was the sandwich parcel and the untouched bottle of milk. Jan's throat contracted as he looked at scrawny Freddie Reed.

The grizzled sergeant jabbed at Jan's ribs with the club and tried to make him confess that he had murdered his friend. Then Jan's anger flared. He knocked the club away. "Sure; he was murdered," he cried vehemently. "And if you give me a chance I'll tell you who did it."

"You will, eh?" the sergeant sneered. "Okay, go ahead. But never mind any monkey-business. We'll know how to make you come clean."

So Jan began his story, telling the cops a little of Freddie's efforts to organize a rank-and-file union, then about that stool-pigeon in Al's speakeasy, and finally about the assault the night before. While he talked he saw the cops exchange meaningful glances and become visibly restive. And when he had finished his story the grizzled sergeant cleared his throat and turned to the younger cop. "Well . . . I suppose it's like the doctor said," he drawled. He glanced at Freddie on the steel bed, the raw bumps on his face, the swollen jaw, the lumpy nose, and the blood which Jan had failed to wipe off last night. "Like the doctor said—the guy died in his sleep. Stroke, I guess. Or heart failure, maybe. Natural causes . . ."

The younger cop twirled his club. He met the sergeant's shrewd eye. "Sure . . . clear case. Just a plain natural death."

The sergeant turned abruptly to Jan. "All right," he barked. "That's all. Now scram. And keep your mouth shut, or you'll be liable to get into trouble and lose your job—understand?"

Jan turned to look at Freddie once more, but the cops pushed him out of the cell. "That's all. Get out! What the hell do you want?"

He walked along the narrow passage between the row of cells, down the stairs, past the leering fool in the iron-grilled booth and out into the thunderous street. His throat lumped. Jesus Christ! It was one thing that Freddie was dead. But that he should be left alone with those uniformed bullies, that seemed a cruel betrayal.

Then as he stood there with the noise of rumbling trucks in his ears—from way off a shrill signal pierced the air. The five minutes call for stand-by in the Shape. And his feet started moving. He must join his gang for the afternoon's work. Nothing he could do for his friend now. Freddie was out on a wide, wide sea.

THE WORD SPREAD SWIFTLY ACROSS THE WATERFRONT. Freddie's been killed! The bastards beat him to death!

And what Freddie had been unable to accomplish when alive that began to take form after he was gone. The men stored away his memory to the time when another such dreamer would appear among them. One who would come on a strong tide of great events.

There had been other Freddie's before him, some with Italian names, Irish, or Scandinavian. The waterfront is strewn with the wrecks of their hopes. Something miscarried. Perhaps their strength failed.

There were other Freddie's before him. The men who handle the New York ships, come blizzard, heat-wave or snow—they have a long tradition of independence and pride. When the young American colonies rose to throw off the yoke of the oversea lords, it was the loaders of Providence, Rhode Island, who burned the armed British vessel, the *Gaspee*.

But black days followed. The cargo workers were oppressed by those who owned the ships, betrayed by their own leaders and forgotten by the millions of citizens they served. And although they toiled long hours at forty cents a day the mer-

chants tried to lower even that pittance. The workers put down their cargo hooks and left the ships, but the police protected the strikebreakers who took the longshoremen's place. So that strike too was broken. Wages were reduced still more. The union was smashed. The men were at the mercy of the ship-owners' whim.

And now the greatest disaster of all befell them.

At that time in England lived a man of great soul, the leader of the workingmen of his country. His name was Tom Mann. He had the vision of gathering into one world-wide brotherhood all men who earn their bread by working on the waterfront, on river and on sea.

To this end Tom Mann sent one of his best men, Edward McHugh, to the new world, and the American Longshoremen's Union was formed. Its motto was: *All men are brothers*. No longer would longshoremen be looked upon with scorn as hoodlums and scum of the waterfront. They would become working citizens of the North American Republic.

Then the blow struck.

One of McHugh's own lieutenants betrayed the trust that had been placed in him. The longshoremen—misled so many times, defeated so often—now turned away from McHugh in great bitterness. He begged them to continue to have faith in *him*. He fought desperately to hold together this union of American longshoremen which had cost so much effort to create. But finally he returned to England, broken-hearted.

And the years rolled on.

Great liners glided up the Hudson. More beautiful and luxurious ships. The elegant passengers on deck beheld the heroic skyline of Manhattan. And the Metropolis grew and became more and more one of the great wonders of the world.

But the men who loaded and unloaded the ships—they were forgotten by the Metropolis, forgotten by their fellow Americans. And once more they demanded to be regarded as free-born men. Yet it is written in the annals of the times that

they were again beaten back and clubbed by the police, and were starved into submission by the owners of the ships they served.

Then as the First World War came to a close there were those of stubborn faith who believed that now a new and better world would rise out of the ashes of the old. And the bolder spirits among the longshoremen called upon their comrades to unite. The vision of Tom Mann and Edward McHugh flashed upon some who saw further than the rest, or were ahead of their time. And they called: "All men are brothers! No more division to weaken us! One great union now!"

Yet again they lost their fight.

The years rolled across the waterfront. Some there were who pleaded that longshoremen be treated as other men, needing food and warmth and shelter like other men, the friendship of other men.

But many who thus cried out were murdered. Many more were beaten and maimed.

Freddies with foreign names came, and the authorities called them dagoes and scum, and destroyed them.

But dreams live on where blackjacks have killed.

HOBOKEN! STURGES AND WHITE! GET GOIN', YOU GUYS!  
Hurry up! Hurry up!"

For some reason they were short of men over at the Sturges and White piers in Jersey, and Jan's gang and a few extras were ordered across. This seldom happened. However, the fellows belted their steel hooks and set out for the ferry house. They had a few minutes' rest in the warm waiting room, then the ferry arrived. A bell rang, and chains rattled. The passengers disembarked. The gang stepped aboard, and soon the old craft started off.

Standing in the prow with Tony, a colored fellow called Slim, and a few other longshoremen, Jan watched the boat push through the stream. The smooth current was flowing out to the sea. White frost covered pier sheds, barges and the large piles of freight on the receding dock. Behind the midtown skyscrapers the early morning sky was afire. Rising from the river, a flock of white gulls turned crimson in the sunshine.

Jan thought of Karen. She had been in bed when he left the house at a quarter of eight, morning-sleepy and warm as he bent down to kiss her. He felt more and more tender toward her. Whatever did he do with himself before he met her?

The running tide moved Tony to song: *Ol' Man River* . . .

Hoarsely the ferry whistle blew a warning to another craft in the fairway. A shaggy-whiskered tug came chugging along with a covered barge on the port side, the barge with a white-lettered legend: Hudson Valley. Sugar Syrups. "Toot-toot!" called the cocky tug, and the two of them, tug and his broad-beamed sugar-barge friend, arm-in-arm, as it were, wandered gaily downstream with a proud plume of silvery steam trailing behind.

*Ol' Man River . . .*

With pounding engines the ferry neared the Jersey shore. The Hoboken Heights were aglow in the morning sun, window-flashing apartment houses, church spires, domes. And in the foreground ships lying at their piers. A confusion of masts and spars, black steel cranes, floats, barges and tugs. White and black smoke rose from the many factory chimneys and drifted leisurely across the stream. There came the clangor of steel from the shipyards, the rattling of winches, and whistles directing the work. Smoke, morning sun, thunder and noise.

And over on those piers there, in large letters, a sign: Sturges and White. A gong rang out in the engine room. The ferry slowed down and nosed into its slip, the propeller churning the water to foam. With a rumble the boat made fast. Bells clanged. Passengers and automobiles streamed ashore.

The men checked in at the Sturges and White gates, where a young fellow took their names. Then they were told to go aboard that freighter lying high in the slip. "Easy," Tony said as they climbed up the side, for the deck was slippery with frost. Forward, the number one winch rattled away in a cloud of white steam, while a draft of rubbish rose from the hold. The ship was being readied for its outbound freight.

A foreman shouted his orders, and Jan went to find himself a hand truck. Midship was a stack of dunnage wood, needed in one of the holds. With Tony's help he piled the wood onto



the truck. A section of the ship's rail had been removed on dock side as preparation for the loading of the ship, and peering over the side Tony saw the dock down below, with barrels and crates and other freight. "Careful," he said to Jan. "This damn deck is slippery like a ballroom floor."

"Hell of a lot you know about ballrooms."

"Yeah, is that so! Before I was married I . . ."

"Sure, sure. Forget it." Bending down Jan grabbed the truck handles, then straightened up with the load. "Give it a push," he said, bracing his feet against the icy deck. But suddenly he slipped and lost his balance and let go of the truck which tumbled over the side. He thrashed the air with his arms. He heard Tony give a yell. Everything turned black before his eyes.

A motor spinning in his head. Strange faces before his eyes. Longshoremen. Foremen. A worried man with a slouch hat. They were holding him, fighting him. "Take it easy," panted the man with the hat. "Jesus, he's as white as a sheet." . . . The motor spun. The faces whirled away and became peanut-small, then with another roar rushed toward him and filled all space, horrible, big, frightening. And the voices grew from whispers to a booming thunder that nearly split his ear drums. He struck out with his arms, to right and left, struggling with the men who tried to hold him. "For the love of God," they cried, "be quiet! We're trying to help you." Whispering now. "He's gone crazy, I think," said the worried man with the hat. His voice rose to a roar. His tie and collar were torn, his hat knocked askew.

With a sickening plunge everything grew black again.

Steel beams and girders. Bewilderment. . . . He was looking up into the ceiling of the pier shed, lying stretched out on a trailer, on his back, while they were pulling him along the center aisle between the freight stacks. "How you feel?" said the man with the hat, walking by his side and holding his arm.

Jan tried to speak, but his lips were tied. A fire in his spine. The motor grinding away in his head. Now he knew! He had fallen . . . down from the ship! God, if he'd broken his back! What would happen to Karen then? . . .

Once more blackness engulfed him.

A white-uniformed doctor bending over him. An ambulance. A crowd of foremen and dock hands. The young fellow who had checked him in, gaping at him, pale around the snout. "I saw him check in this morning," the youngster said, subdued. "Drink this," said the doctor, putting a glass to his mouth. Jan drank. Weakness flowed over him. His head fell back.

"He's coming to," said the black-hooded Sister.

Jan slowly turned his eyes around. He was lying on an emergency table, still in his working clothes. A robed Sister was bending over him, wiping blood from his face. An old man, an orderly, took off his shoes and socks. "But he's clean," said the orderly. "Don't need to bathe him. He's clean." The Sister looked. "Yes. I'll wipe that blood from his leg."

Jan felt panicky. He tried to rise, but his back was numb. "I want to go," he said. "Don't want to stay here."

"So why did you come?" said the Sister, misunderstanding him, and feeling hurt.

"I was unconscious," he answered simply, feeling much too sick to crack a joke.

The Sister glanced at him, startled, then smiled. She stretched out her hand toward his face. He breathed in a sweet odor. The hospital room faded out.

WHEN JAN WOKE THE NEXT TIME HE FOUND HIMSELF tucked into a hospital bed. He was bandaged here and bandaged there, and iodine was smeared all over him. His back ached. Otherwise he didn't feel very ill.

The smell of carbolic acid and medicine started a violent reaction in him, and his first impulse was to get out of this hospital. He detested hospitals. He had been in them before, both during the war and after, and he loathed and feared them. And so had his maimed and wounded buddies in the army. A hospital was a repulsive place of amputations, mysterious operations when a man was rendered helpless by ether, and slow pining away while the guts turned yellow in you. They had all solemnly agreed that the big thing was to get out of there quick. If a man could walk, he should by all means sneak off at the first opportunity. For in that place of moans and ether-stench death lurked in every nook. Outside the hospital was life.

Sniffing the carbolic acid with disgust, Jan wondered if he were able to walk. He moved his head on the pillow and looked for the door. And then—what did he see! On a chair near the bed sat a shrewd-looking, mustached young man with an enormous leather briefcase on his knees. Before the fellow had time

to open his mouth Jan knew him to be the representative for Sturges and White's insurance company, which was supposed to award compensation to its injured workmen.

Jan didn't like the fellow's appearance. For that matter, he didn't like any kind of insurance company agent. Like other longshoremen, he knew that most of them were crooks, and the compensation business was a chiseler's racket, with lawyers and doctors on the Company's side. A plain workman got the bum's rush.

Seeing that Jan had regained his conscious state of mind the insurance lawyer bent forward with apparent concern. "How do you feel?" he inquired, producing a large form sheet from his briefcase. He fished a fountain pen from his breast pocket while studying Jan closely, as if to take his innermost measure. "Feeling a little better?" he asked hopefully. "You don't look so bad, you know."

Jan glared at him. "A lot you care how I feel," he shot back. "Afraid I'll cost you a thousand bucks, eh? Listen to me. All I want is to get out of here. Don't want nothing to do with a lot of fee-splitting bastards. Understand?"

His eyes narrowing, the insurance lawyer fingered the form sheet. This was rather a surprise. Longshoremen were generally meek and subdued.

Jan tried to discover whether any part of his body was broken or out of joint. But he found he could move both legs and arms. He could even shift his torso a bit. It hurt like living hell, still he felt a vast amount of confidence. Nothing was broken. He would be able to walk. Not this minute maybe, but soon. He would get out of this carbolic-stinking hospital and go to see his friend, Dr. Thomas. There was a doctor for you!

On looking up he met the crafty eyes of the insurance lawyer, form sheet in one hand and in the other his fountain pen. "Hold on!" he cried, as Jan made an effort to sit up. "You can't do that! Might make your case worse. Got to hear what the doctor says."

"This carcass is my own," Jan retorted, his face drawn with pain. "You own no part of it." Then he sank back on the pillow, satisfied once more that he was merely battered and bruised and not broken in the least. The knowledge kindled his defiance.

At this stage of developments a spinsterish nurse came scurrying into the room. She had heard the loud talk. Now she rolled her eyes to high heavens and raised her arms in professional despair. "Man, what are you doing?" she shrilled to Jan. "For God's sake, lie still!"

"Says he wants to leave," said the sullen insurance man.

"Leave!" she repeated, horrified. "Here he comes in an ambulance, unconscious and blood-splashed. And now he wants to leave! He suffers from a concussion of the brain, I think."

Jan lay very still, temporarily weakened by the spinster's description of his mode of arriving here. And he didn't like her reference to a possible concussion of his brain. He wasn't dead sure what concussion meant, but it sounded bad. Any monkeying with the brain was bad, and he thought with a shiver of the brain cases he'd seen in the war.

His confidence returned, however. His brain felt all right, and his mind was as clear as a bell. The big thing was not to let them tell you anything. He watched reluctantly while the spinster tucked the blankets around him and propped the pillow under his head. "My good man," she simpered, "be grateful if you can leave in two or three months."

Jan detested her. "That's what you think," he muttered. "I'll show you."

She exchanged a prim glance with the insurance man, pursed her lips and piously folded her hands. "These foreigners!" she moaned. "Oh, these rude foreigners!"

Then Jan flung the blanket aside and sat up in bed, his eyes ablaze with resentment. "I'm getting out of here!" he roared. "Where are my clothes?"

The effort proved too much for him, however, and he was

swept by a wave of nausea. His head drooped. He fell back on the pillow. "But I'll get out of here tomorrow," he said. "Or maybe this afternoon."

"You won't unless you sign away your rights to compensation," said the insurance man testily.

"I'll sign," Jan groaned. "Hand me that paper. Didn't you hear, I don't want your damned money. Nothing to get anyway. You and your pals would skin me to the bone."

"He's impossible!" the spinster shrilled, pressing her hands to her flat chest and rolling her eyes.

The insurance man swallowed Jan's insults and quickly shoved the form sheet under his nose. He stuck the fountain pen in his hand. "Here," he said. "You sign here. But blame yourself and not me."

"Wait!" the nurse whispered, cocking an ear to the door. "The doctor is coming. Wait a bit."

The proceedings halted as the doctor entered the room. He was a dark-haired, spare young man, with a likeable air. Something about him reminded Jan of Dr. Thomas. "How are you making out?" he asked genially. "Your back hurt a lot?"

"He wants to get up and leave," the spinster chirped sarcastically, tossing her head back.

The doctor's eyes twinkled. Jan felt a lot stronger at once.

"He's got to sign first," put in the insurance man.

Ignoring him, the doctor bent over Jan and moved his hand slowly along his back. "You had quite a jolt," he said pleasantly. "Landed on the end of your spine. But there's nothing broken. You're getting over it quickly, I see."

"If he's leaving he's got to sign," protested the insurance company's man.

"Okay, I'll sign," said Jan, reaching for the form sheet.

But the doctor restrained him. "You think it wise to sign away your rights before we know the outcome of this?"

"Sure. So long as nothing is broken, it's okay. Here goes."

The insurance man snatched the paper from him and

pressed a blotter against his wet signature. Having tucked the precious document into his briefcase he grabbed his hat and hurried out of the room without another look back at Jan.

"He must sign this too," declared the spinster nurse and produced another blank. "This is the hospital release."

Waving her aside, the young doctor turned to Jan with a friendly smile. "You rest now," he said. "I'll be around tomorrow morning. Then, if you are well enough, I'll let you go. If not I'll make you stay another few days. How's that?"

"It's okay with me," said Jan. For he liked the man, and trusted him. "Okay, Doc. Anything you say."

THE DOCTOR HAD GONE. THE EYE-ROLLING SPINSTER NURSE had stalked from the room. Jan was lying still on his back, grateful to have escaped with such slight injury. Now, if only Karen would come! He glanced up at the least sound from over at the door in the hope it might be she. The dear girl, if she would come! This near-fatal accident brought home to him with new force how much Karen meant to him.—And yet how abruptly they might have been parted!

Lying with closed eyes he thought of this morning when he kissed her goodbye.—His life would be poor without her. He tensed at the thought. The fear of losing her always loomed at the back of his mind, and whenever he believed he had won a little victory she would elude him and leave him floundering. He could will, but could not force his will. He must have patience, patience.

He pretended to sleep, for he didn't want to talk to the other bed-ridden people. They were chatting away like old women about their ailments and their pains. Oh, hell, he wished he were out of this place! Wished he were back at the pier among his pals and could sniff the salt river wind, and with the clang and bang of work in his ears.

Why didn't she come? . . . He felt a growing impatience.



They'd surely have sent her a message about his accident. Or perhaps she had not been home to receive it! Then where could she have been? Suspicion crept into his mind, and jealousy tortured him. That damned Kelly! If he were only out of the way! The world would be a brighter place to live in.

The hours dragged into the late afternoon, yet no Karen appeared. His mood wavered between fear that her invisible enemy had struck her, a suspicion that she was consorting with Kelly, or that she didn't care enough to come.

Evening arrived, and it grew dark. And still he was alone. He felt terribly alone now. How could she be that heartless? Didn't she even care to find out if he were still alive!

Karen didn't come that night. But the next morning at around eleven o'clock there was a sudden flurry at the door, and turning his head Jan saw Karen standing over there, lovely in her finery, while out in the hall the startled nurse was craning her neck. "Karen!" he called, half rising in the bed, but falling back again with a groan.

"Jan! . . ." Running across the floor she threw her arms around him and burst into tears. "Jan, oh, Jan!"

She overwhelmed him. This was a Karen he had never known before. She was not putting on a show, he felt that. This was real! Real affection breaking forth from her innermost being.

She nearly smothered him, and with his free arm around her he patted and stroked her. He didn't dare speak. This was so much more than he had hoped for. He feared that any word of his might break the wonderful spell.

Raising her head Karen gazed at him through her tears, her lips trembling as she spoke: "Jan, darling, I thought I'd go out of my mind when they told me . . ."

She broke into tears once more, and he let her cry, for he was stirred beyond words. "Darling," she had called him!

She stroked his arm with her little white hand as if wanting

to make sure he was still with her. "Tell me, are you badly hurt?" she whispered, her anxious eyes traveling from the bandage around his head to the smears of iodine on his jaw.

"No, no," he assured her. "I'll be out of here in a day or two. Don't worry."

"You're sure. They said you'd fallen down from a ship, and were taken away in an ambulance."

"Yes, but I got out of it easy. I'll be up in a couple of days."

She sobbed with relief, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief.

"You better take off your coat," he said. "It's warm in here."

So she did, and he watched her slim figure as she turned to hang her coat over the back of the bed. She was a fine-looking woman, all right. The other patients gaped at her. The spinster nurse was scuttling in and out of the room like a worried hen, afraid she would miss a single trick.

Karen pulled a chair over to the bed. She had calmed down a little, yet he noticed a certain nervousness about her. She had something on her mind, something which had nothing to do with his accident. From time to time she gazed absent-mindedly before her, biting her lip and plucking distractedly at her dress.

Thinking he might be mistaken, and that it was his plight that worried her after all, he assured her he would be able to leave the hospital in a day or two. She nodded, but that other matter still troubled her. He began to feel uneasy, and his joy over her affection was clouded over with suspicion. That Karen! You never knew where you had her!

Having sat thus for a while she suddenly remembered something and took a postcard out of her bag. "I almost forgot," she said. "Came with the morning mail. From a friend of yours, I think."

He took the card from her. On the back was written a brief sentence in a scratchy kind of script. "Greetings from Charlie." And today's date.

For a second or two his mind was a blank. But then he remembered. Greetings from Charlie! Good God! The signal that Lizzie had something important to tell him about Karen, and would be waiting at the ferry house at eight o'clock that night.

His hand sank. There she sat at his bedside, not suspecting the signal Lizzie had flashed. He watched her morosely. What had she been up to? What had she done? Was that bastard Kelly involved?

She saw that he was disturbed. "What's the matter?" she asked, judging rightly that his mood had something to do with the card. "From a friend of yours? Just a greeting, isn't it?"

"From a friend—yes," he said, lowering his eyes to the card. Karen's nervousness, and now this call—what did it all add up to? There Lizzie would be waiting tonight, and he unable to meet her. Lizzie bursting to talk, while he was chained to this bed!

What had Karen done? . . . Here she sat, yet it wouldn't do to ask her. Trouble! Trouble! Nothing but trouble all the time!

Karen turned around as the nurse scurried into the room and announced that it was time for the visitors to leave. She rose reluctantly and put on her coat, then bent over Jan and kissed him, and he saw that she was near breaking into tears. She looked so utterly miserable. What in God's name had she done?

"Come back tomorrow," he said, pressing her hand.

"Ye-es . . . I'll see." She had a sob in her throat as she turned and fled from the room, the spinster gawking after her and clasping her hands at these goings on in her respectable ward.

Jan kept gazing toward the door long after Karen had gone, asking himself again and again: "What in God's name had she done?"

HE HAD TIME TO WORRY ABOUT KAREN ALL DAY AND FAR into the night. And she was on his mind the next morning the moment he opened his eyes.

Late in the forenoon the doctor came and decided Jan would have to stay in bed for several days. The ligaments of his back were strained, and complications would be likely to develop if he left the hospital now. Jan accepted the verdict meekly, for he continued to have faith in the young doctor. And his back had grown so lame that he was only too glad to lie still.

But as soon as the doctor left he continued to worry about Karen. His nervousness increased while the hours crept on, for she didn't come that day. He grew alarmed. Torture to be lying here, with all these mysterious things going on outside.

Evening came. Jan was in an overwrought state of mind when he caught a glimpse of Tony out in the hall. "Hello!" he called, and his plump Italian friend strode into the room, spiffed up in his Sunday clothes, his curly hair sedately slicked down. But a glance at his sober face told Jan that he didn't bring good news. "What is it?" he asked, with mounting anxiety. "What are you so glum about?"

Tony drew up a chair and seated himself stiffly, pulling at his trouser knees so that the creases wouldn't spoil. He threw an awed look at the other beds and queasily sniffed the carbolic acid.

Then he turned his somber eyes on Jan. "Yeah, I got lousy news for you," he said, by way of introduction. "When it rains it pours, as they say."

"What's happened?" said Jan savagely. "Never mind all this crap. Come across and let me know."

"Well, I've done the best I could for you," Tony said in funereal tones.

"Has it got to do with Karen, or no?"

"In a way . . . sure."

Jan made an effort to sit up, but could barely raise his head. He regarded Tony with disgust. "Out with it!" he groaned. "Crap's sake, let me have it, man! Why the hell don't you talk?"

"Well . . . the landlord is throwing you out of the house, an' he says he's goin' to keep your furniture."

Jan's face was a blank. "What you mean, throwing us out?"

"Says the rent hasn't been paid for the last three months, and he's tired of asking for it."

"Rent . . . not paid! He's crazy." Jan stared at Tony fixedly. "Hasn't Karen paid him? She was supposed to handle that part of it."

"Says she hasn't got the dough," Tony replied, brushing off an imaginary speck of dust from his trouser knee.

"That's funny! I've given her all I earned almost. And there's still some in the bank."

"No, there ain't," Tony interrupted him regretfully. "Karen told me everything. She's scared to death. Afraid you'll raise hell when you get wise to what she's done. Says she spent the dough makin' whoopee. Must have been nutty, she says to me. Took a little at the time, you know, and then it was all gone."

"So that's it!" Jan clicked his tongue. He felt greatly re-

lieved. If that was why she acted so peculiarly—well, then it wasn't so bad. He had feared worse.

Tony was talking: “. . . did the best I could, and had to work fast, seein' as I don't have much time except at night.”

“What you mean, you worked fast?”

Tony produced a wad of bills. “Here's fifty bucks. And I might be able to put my hands on a little more.”

Jan eyed the money. “Where the hell did you get that?”

“Borrowed it. From Mrs. Blom.”

“Mrs. Blom! Can you beat that!”

“Yeah, the old gal is okay. But listen—there's an empty flat over on Ninth Avenue, in case you want me to put a couple o' dollars down.”

“Tony, you're a pal. Do what you think best. As long as Karen has a place to sleep. I'll try to get out of here double-quick, and then I'll straighten things out.”

“All right. I'll see what I can do. Oh, by the way . . .” He pulled a postcard out of his pocket. “Almost forgot. Your missus told me to give you this. Came in the morning mail, she said. Well, so long then. I'll be over to see you soon as I can.”

He picked up his hat and crossed the floor. And while Tony's footsteps drew off out in the hall, Jan lay staring at the card. For here Lizzie flashed him another call, her handwriting more feverishly scratchy than the first time. “Greetings from Charlie.” And today's date. His head spun. He thought that Tony had just explained everything, yet here Lizzie's frantic signal summoning him!

A GUST OF WIND SWEEPED BY THE WINDOWS OUTSIDE THE hospital. Jan looked at the clock. Eight now, and Lizzie waiting at the ferry house!

What the devil had Karen done? What did Lizzie want to tell him? . . . He worried until late at night, slept badly, and started racking his brain the moment he woke the next day.

Early that morning he had still another visitor. And who could it be but Lizzie herself! He could hardly believe his eyes when he saw her frowsy figure pop into the doorway, perched on high heels, a remarkable hat on her bleached hair, a paper bag clasped in her hand, and well wrapped in Kelly's fur coat. She looked scared as she stood there, blinking her tired eyes. And very weary and sad.

Her powdered face lighted up as she caught sight of Jan, and she tripped across the floor. "Lordy me!" she gasped, with a stare at his bandaged head. She sniffled and coughed, for she had a cold. "Dearie, I didn't know you was in the hospital until last night."

"Did you go to the ferry?" he asked.

"Did I! . . ." She laughed bleakly. "Where you think I got this cold? For two nights I stood in the icy wind. And I'm tellin' you, Jan, it was freezing. When you didn't come, I says

to myself: there's some jinx in it. Jan is a gentleman, an' he wouldn't keep a lady waiting like this if he could help it. So I drops in on Karen on my way home, pretendin' I just come for a visit like, and she tells me how you had an accident. Poor boy, an' to think you might have killed yourself an' . . ."

"Tell me about Karen," he cut in. "What in God's name has happened?"

"Sure, an' I'll tell you," said Lizzie and blew her nose, coughed and pounded her chest. "Lordy me, I do think this'll be the end of me. I feel weak, Jan. So help me God, I don't feel strong."

Jan mumbled his heart-felt sympathy, while he squirmed with impatience.

"I brought you some fruit," she prattled and put the paper bag on a little table near the bed.

"Thanks, Lizzie. Awfully kind of you. But tell me about Karen now."

"Sure, sure. I will, dearie. I will. I know you're dying to know. That's why I wrote you two cards. Sure, I says to myself, this is goin' to warm Jan's heart. And he deserves it. You're a friend, Jan, an' Lizzie's one who stands by her friends."

Jan nodded, afraid to make a comment of any kind for fear it might start Lizzie off on another tangent. She was sniffing and folding the damp handkerchief. Behind her, out in the hall, and staring sternly and disapprovingly at Lizzie, stood the spinster nurse, her hands clasped in supplication, as it were. She had just managed to swallow this affair of flamboyant Karen sweeping into the ward and throwing herself at Jan's breast. Now the antipodal figure of Lizzie jerked the spinster out of her precarious adjustment. She rolled her eyes heavenward. What was this hospital coming to?

"Now tell me about Karen," said Jan. "Lizzie, be a good girl."

"Yes . . . well, let's see. Where do I begin?" She glanced



cautiously around. "Think I'm safe?" she whispered. "He would kill me, he would, if he knew I was here."

"How could he know?" Jan replied wearily.

"Hel!" said Lizzie, with a cynical laugh. "Seems to me there's nothin' that man doesn't know. And that's a fact. He's smart, Kelly is, an' . . ."

"Tell me about Karen, or I get mad!"

"Dearie, don't." She put out a soothing hand. "I got to have somebody speak nice to me. Jan, I ain't got much to live for, I tell you."

He said nothing. He riveted his gaze on the ceiling up above him.

"Well, where do I begin?" said Lizzie, pulling herself together. "Well, it was the other day. Tuesday, I guess. I was just havin' a bit of lunch when who comes here, ringing the bell? Karen, if you please. Where's Kelly? she says. I got to see Kelly right away. An' Lordy me, she was terribly upset. Never saw anything like it."

"Was Kelly there?" Jan put in tensely.

"As a matter o' fact, he was," Lizzie replied with demure dignity. "He just happened to have lunch with me. So Karen says she wants to see him. Somethin' important, she says. All right, I says to her. Take it easy now. You're an old friend o' mine, and I never yet turned my back on a friend. I told her that. Still I felt she was takin' liberties. For after all, Kelly's supposed to be my man. It's Lizzie who paid the price . . ."

"So you let her in," Jan suggested, in order to put Lizzie back on the track she was about to lose.

"I did. Well, she kind o' pushed her way in. She looked awfully worried. So there was Kelly. Hello, she says to him. Kelly, I got to have some money right away. How about it? And Kelly ogles her. Yeah, is that so? he says, with a smirkin' kind o' smile I didn't like. Well, maybe, he says. How much you want? Karen was bitin' her nails. I could use a couple of hundred, she says. But I need 'em right away. So Kelly gets

up from the chair. That's a lot, he says. Two hundred bucks. Then he looks Karen up and down, an' I know what's on his mind. I'm tellin' you, Jan, it hurts a woman when she's been standin' by a man through thick and thin and taken all the dirt. I ain't pretty like Karen is, still I've been good enough in my day. An' when Kelly's wife went back on him it was Lizzie who had all the understandin' an' . . ."

"Yes, yes. But go on and tell me—what happened next?"

"Well, where was I? . . . Oh, yes. So Kelly says to her: Two hundred is a lot. Got to give me a little time. What you doin' tonight? he says. Why don't you come over to my place? Around nine or so. Maybe I'll have the dough for you."

"He did, the bastard!" Jan burst out, interrupting Lizzie against his better judgment.

"That he did. An' right in front of me too. Showing no consideration. And here I've been . . ."

"What did Karen say?"

"Say! . . . Listen, Jan! That's what I wanted to see you about. That's why I wrote them cards and waited for you in the awful cold by the ferry house. Sure . . . Karen looked at him straight, an' her eyes were like blazing coals, I'm tellin' you. An' her cheeks were apple-red. Lordy, I thought to myself, I've never seen her that pretty. So she steps up to Kelly an' she slaps him right smack in the puss. You pig! she says. I wouldn't come to your filthy hangout if you paid me a million bucks!"

"Are you telling me the truth?" Jan cried.

"I'm tellin' you. Now Kelly's my man, and I'm standing by him, I am, but I feel he got what was comin' to him. He's okay, an' I'm not saying nothin' against him, only he ain't been acting right since Karen changed."

"Seems things are coming my way," said Jan, with a faraway look.

"They are, an' you deserves it," Lizzie declared. "What happened to Karen is a miracle, an' I believe it's mostly because o'

you. But take my advice and don't work her too fast. If you rush her she'll close up like a clam. Women are funny that way, an' Karen is a peculiar gal. You take it easy, Jan, 'n' you'll see. By and by she'll be all yours, an' you won't be able to get rid of her even if you chase her with a stick. That's the way women are."

She blew her red nose. Her eyes swept the ward. "Well, I got to get goin'," she said. "God bless you, an' let's hope everything will turn out for the best."

He took her hand and pressed it hard. "Lizzie, you're an angel. I could kiss you!"

"Lordy me, not now," she simpered, a blush covering her face under the heavy layers of make-up. "Not here anyway. Still it's nice to hear somethin' pretty once in a while. I'm tired of being called a bloody bitch an' a whore an' things. And that by the very person one has been standin' by through thick an' thin all these years. Jan—I ain't no whore. All I want is my man."

"I'll help you all I can," he said.

"We'll help each other," she sniffled, partly because of her emotion and partly because of the cold. She fumbled with her handbag and wrapped Kelly's fur coat tight around her. "All right, dearie. Get well quick. Now I got to run."

"So long, Lizzie . . ." He watched her trip across the floor on her wobbly heels. At the door she turned around, smiled and waved her hand, then hurried past the outraged nurse who had been spying out in the hall.

AFTER LIZZIE LEFT, JAN LAY THINKING OF ALL SHE HAD told him. It seemed too good to be true. He hadn't had an inkling that Karen had come this close to him. But then she was always springing a fresh surprise on him.

A few newspapers were on the side table, and he reached for one and let his eye travel idly across the front page. The Coolidge boom was still on the up, an era of installment-plan buying, stock-market gambling and smug belief that Utopia was here. The police raided bootleggers' dens, or pocketed bootleggers' bribes, and the Coast Guard chased rumrunning pirates right up the Hudson River. Jan prayed that Kelly, too, would be nabbed soon.

He turned the page. And there a caption said that the International had ousted Trotsky as executive. . . .

Oh, crap! He wanted to read something that made sense, and so skipped ahead to the good old shipping page. Here, under the heading: Incoming Steamships, he learned that the *Leviathan* was coming into port to dock at West 46th Street. He pictured the great liner gliding up the river with a pack of barking tugboats escorting her. Whistles blowing. And sirens giving deep-throated blasts.

Tomorrow the *Manasquan* would dock at his own pier, and

he would have helped to unload her if he were not lying here stretched out on his back. The *Manasquan* was coming in from London with a cargo of rubber, tea, textiles and other stuff, and there would be a hell of a rush on the pier.

The *Olympic* and the *Bremen* were sailing. The *Aquitania* was expected in from the sea.

Reports said the weather was rough out in the Atlantic Ocean. Incoming ships told of gales with sleet and snow.

He avidly read the whole page, even the reports of the tides, high water and low at Sandy Hook, Governors Island and Hell Gate. And the sun's rising and its setting. Then he lay thinking of the river, the wind's blowing, and ships bellowing off the coast.

Folding the paper he put it back on the table with a sigh. Plenty of time to mull over his own affairs now. The first chance he had he'd go again to see Captain Wallace and hear about that other job—something with the pilots, or on a fire boat or with the Coast Guard. Work on the docks was not safe enough for a married man. What would have happened to Karen if he'd been disabled or killed? He shrank at the thought. He got off easy this time, but who knew when it would be his turn next? He counted the men who had been killed at the dock during the ten years he'd been working there. He remembered Patrick Dillon who fell down into a hold and broke his neck; and a nice quiet fellow Pat used to be. Charlie Diehl had his right arm torn off when it was caught in a rope sling that sped aloft. Dick Kester was killed in the ship's hold when a crate fell down and crushed him. And so it went: Phil MacLean, George Hart, Maniero. . . . Jan remembered nine men who had been killed, and he didn't even try to count the other accidents, and all the men taken sick with rheumatism and tuberculosis from getting soaked while waiting in the Shape.

No, he would call it quits as soon as he could. He had been lucky so far, but luck has a way of turning on a man.

JAN HAD A LONG NIGHT'S SLEEP AND STAYED IMPATIENTLY IN bed another day. But the next morning he decided there was too much of importance going on outside the hospital, and he must leave. The young doctor told him he was taking a chance, still Jan demanded the hospital release and signed it. With the aid of two nurses he managed to get into his clothes. And so he walked out—the spinster quite disappointed, for now there would be no more strange and colorful women to enliven the drab monotony of the ward.

At the river he boarded a ferry to take him across to the Manhattan side. He felt free and happy, in spite of his sore back. And this could be a morning in the spring, a beautiful New York December day with sunlight and warmth. A blue-gray haze softened the outlines of all objects, the ships in their berths, tugboats and barges and other craft. And with sirens blowing a big liner was escorted downstream by a swarm of busy tugs—the White Star liner, *Olympic*, bound for Southampton. The ship loomed large in the mist, gliding off and then disappearing in a cloud of sunlight and smoke.

He watched it all as eagerly as if he had been away from it, not a few days but that many years. And with leaping heart

he thought of Karen who would be waiting for him in their new place.

The ferry's engine was thumping away. Out in the sunlight a screaming gull swooped down and picked something eatable from the stream. Looking across the water Jan saw the Manhattan skyscrapers rising up behind the river mist. And far away in that slip over there, half lost among the large craft, he could see Nils' little barge. He decided he would go to see his friend the first chance he got.

Having stepped off the ferry he hurried toward Ninth Avenue as fast as his aching back would allow. He passed a few small shops along the street, a Chinese laundry, a grocery store and a tailor's hole-in-the-wall. Then he stopped at the address Tony had given him, an old tumbledown brick house with a rusty fire-escape in front. The menacing structure of the Elevated shut out the sky from view and plunged the littered street into gloom.

Side-stepping the garbage cans outside the door, he entered a moldy hall and climbed a flight of stairs so dark that he could hardly see his way there. Strident voices reached him from the various flats. He continued his climb. The third floor, Tony said. . . . Here then. This must be the door. A melancholy blue light shone dimly through the frosted window. Turning the knob he entered a small kitchen lighted by a gas jet on the wall. The flat smelled pleasantly soapy from scrubbed floors. And through the doorway he saw Karen in the front room. She wore a house dress and had wrapped a cloth around her blonde hair while rubbing away at the grimy windows with a rag.

She had not heard him opening the door, and he stood watching her. He looked at her little hand which held the rag. The hand was red and blue after the floor scrubbing, and seemed pathetically inadequate for the job. Yet Karen was

putting all her will behind her efforts to get those windows bright and clean.

The flat was almost bare. A bed, a table and a few chairs was all their former landlord had allowed Karen to take. But—not entirely all. For over on the mantelpiece stood a large, blue-and-gold Sèvres vase Jan had brought home to Karen as a gift not long ago from the “antique” store on Eighth Avenue. It warmed his heart that she should have saved it.

He took a step forward. Hearing a sound behind her Karen turned around and saw him. Her hand fell to her side and a frightened look came into her eyes, as if she feared the reckoning for having squandered his bank account.

A glance at his face assured her she had nothing to fear. She dropped the rag, ran over to him and threw her arms around his neck.

“My back, my back!” he gasped. “Go easy, kid!”

He drew her close to him. Neither of them spoke. A thundering El-train passed outside the windows, and not until the sound had died away down the avenue did Karen free herself from Jan’s embrace. She brushed at her eyes.

“Tried to clean up a little,” she said, with a gesture at the scrubbed floors. And by her tone of voice he knew she hoped he would make some appreciative comment. Which he did. “Good girl,” he said. “Well, don’t work too hard. As soon as my back gets better I’ll help you with these things.”

But now Karen seemed to feel that a little excitement was in place, for she struck a pose and flung out her hand. “Look at this dump!” she cried. “That wop-friend of yours! This is what he got for us.”

“Tony did his best,” Jan said with a grin. “And we won’t stay here long.”

Another train bumped along out on the tracks, this time uptown bound, the passengers looking into the flat with curious eyes. Karen stuck out her tongue. “I hate them!” she said, smoldering. “Look how they stare. All morning they’ve been



doing it. God Almighty, I think they're riding back and forth out there only to get my goat."

"We'll put up some curtains," Jan pacified her. Groaning with pain he laid himself down on the bed. "I'll rest half an hour," he said, "then I'm going over to see Dr. Thomas. Bet you I'll be back at work in a couple of days."

Karen picked up the rag and tackled the windows once more while Jan watched her, a wave of tenderness welling up in him. How womanly she looked in that house dress! Never in all her gold bangles and finery had she seemed that sweet to him. And he remembered what Lizzie had said. "By and by she'll be all yours." . . . Perhaps, he thought. He could only pray and hope.

WELL, WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE," SAID YOUNG DR. Thomas as Jan stepped into the office on Waverly Street. "I haven't seen you for a long time."

Jan explained about his back. The doctor looked him over. "You need a little massage," he said. "That will limber you up.—And so you left Mrs. Blom," he commented as he began the treatment. "Where do you live now?"

Jan told how he had lived on the outskirts of the Village for a while, but had now moved to Ninth Avenue. The doctor asked a few more questions, and presently Jan found himself telling the whole story about Karen and himself. Dr. Thomas was surprised. "You mean you two live together as man and wife!" he exclaimed.

Jan admitted the fact. And having full confidence in the doctor he mentioned some of the difficulties Karen and he had encountered together—secrets he had not betrayed to anyone else before.

"Remarkable," the doctor said. "Do you know, if you had asked my advice last spring I'd have said: Don't take up with this girl. Nothing good can come of it."

Jan gave a start, but Dr. Thomas calmed him. "Don't get

excited. Luckily you stalked in where angels would fear to tread."

"What I wonder," said Jan, "does she really care for me? It looks like it now, of course. But she's changed back and forth so many times. One can never be sure."

"I knew you'd ask me that. And here's my honest answer: I believe she loves you as much as she is able to. I think she'll love you more as time goes on. And I believe you're the first man she has ever really loved."

"But . . . she was married once before," Jan said, astonished. "There was that man in Norway. The one they found dead up in Boston."

The doctor shook his head. "She didn't love him. She wasn't capable of love at that time. No more so than a girl of eight or ten is able to love—at least in the sense that grown people love each other."

Jan appeared even more puzzled.

The doctor saw it. "I'll try to make myself clear," he said. "You ought to get this straight. But first let us be fair to that man, Bjorn. He is dead, and I don't think I'm wrong when I say he was destroyed because he had the misfortune to marry a beautiful creature who seemed outwardly mature, but who by her inner lack of development was really nothing but a little girl. And a spoiled brat in the bargain probably. I believe Bjorn was a good and likeable man. And if he'd chanced to meet Karen as she is now—well, that might have been another story."

"He said so himself in that letter.—I don't think you've ever loved me, he wrote."

"He did! Then he knew. He must have gone through hell, poor fellow. Well . . . I'll try to tell you a few things about her. When I examined her last spring I saw at once that she had other troubles besides those seizures. There's a medical term for it, but let's forget all that. It boils down to this: her psycho-sexual maturity has been delayed for some reason. Now

since the danger is past I don't see any harm in explaining to you. It might help you to understand her still better."

And while Jan listened intently the doctor told how Karen's very slimness and delicate build was a physical expression of that immaturity which was the key to her character. Men had always been drawn to her because of her frail beauty, and had desired to protect her and take care of her. But after they had fallen in love with her they found she had nothing to offer them. They were powerless against her frigidity. Her Norwegian husband had learned that.

And women of Karen's type, the doctor went on to say, are driven by a goading urge to assert themselves as *women*. They always try to conquer the men they meet and so to silence that muffled voice which accuses them from deep in their subconscious nature—accuses them of being inadequate. "It was thus," the doctor concluded, "that I diagnosed Karen when I talked to her at Mrs. Blom's. This is the whole tragic story of her life. I didn't believe she would mature. So many of them never do. And if you had asked my advice I would have said: Stay away from trouble."

"We've had plenty of that," Jan said grimly.

Dr. Thomas nodded. "Why wouldn't you? You won't believe me if I tell you how many marriages go on the rocks because of frigidity in the woman. Almost any other man I know would have given up. But she has been awakened, she has begun to mature. And that's what I mean when I say that you are the first man she's ever really loved. She has not been able to love before this."

Jan had been hanging on to every word the doctor spoke. Now he sat in silent thought, his mind going back to that morning when he found Karen in the river mist. "And what's best for me to do?" he asked at last. "How should I handle her?"

"Why ask me?" the doctor answered. "Who waked her

from her strange sleep in the first place? You go on and be yourself. That's all."

"There's only one thing that really worries me now," Jan said. "That's when she takes to drink. If I could only stop her from that."

"Yes, yes, try to keep liquor away from her. But I think she'll crave it less as she develops into a more normal person."

They talked a while more. Then Jan got ready to go, and they shook hands. "And try to keep her occupied," the doctor said in parting. "Try to keep her mind off herself. That goes for most of us," he added. "If you want to be happy, the good old formula is: Get busy. Forget yourself."

A GRAVE MOOD POSSESSED JAN AS HE LEFT THE DOCTOR'S office. How his life had shaped itself mysteriously! How little we know, in the beginning of our days, what is in store for us!

The trees were winter-bare outside St. John's Church on the corner of West Eleventh and Waverly Place. Yet the sun was warm. A low murmur of organ music was heard from within the church, and for some obscure reason it brought Jan's mind back to the many times, in years long ago, when he had followed his parents to the little village church back in Bohemia. He remembered his mother's work-worn hands holding the prayer book, and her head bent devoutly as the priest before the altar intoned: "Lord, have mercy upon us. . . ."

He stood listening to the music. And even after all these years the sacred words of the Litany echoed in his mind: "In all times of our tribulation . . ."

He was carried away by a rush of memories from his boyhood by the Elbe, near the Bohemian mountains. He thought of those who still hoped for his return. And the memories raised in him an emotion which brought a mist before his eyes.

The afternoon was summer-like as he slowly walked along the street. And this, too, contributed to his solemn mood. He

had to tell himself over and over that a whole month ago, on a cold and stormy night, little Freddie Reed had been beaten and clubbed, and had then died in his lonely cell in the Sailors' Home. He wished that Freddie could hear what some of the men were saying these days. Then he would know that he had not lost, but won. And continuing along the sunny street Jan wondered if perhaps Freddie did know. It seemed difficult to believe that a man's true destiny could be brought to an end by the mere swinging of a hoodlum's club.

He was full of emotion. He felt how fleeting is life. How short the time to be near those we love. And he hastened his steps in his wish to be with Karen again.

She had finished cleaning the flat when he got home. She had put their few belongings in order, and prepared lunch. "You stayed a long time," she said. "I was afraid something might have happened to you."

"We had a little talk."

"How does your back feel? Did he help you any?"

"Oh, sure. . . . Yes, I feel a lot better already."

They sat down to eat. And Jan told of his plan to buy some odds and ends of furniture in the "antique" store. The stuff there exerted a great fascination for him, and it didn't help a bit that Karen repeatedly expressed her contemptuous opinion of the place.

She flicked a moody glance at the monstrous Sèvres vase. "Jan," she said earnestly, "I won't be able to stay in the same house with more of that junk."

"Be reasonable," he protested in a tone which clearly allowed for her ignorance. "Be reasonable, Karen. Antiques, you know."

"I beg you," she said. "Jan, please!"

He shifted position uncomfortably. "Well, now if you feel that way about it . . . okay then."

They ate in silence, if silence it can be called with two

thundering Elevated trains shuttling back and forth outside the windows, one uptown bound, the other downtown. "We'll get some curtains right away," Jan said. "That will help a little. Cheer up."

"It isn't the trains," she said, toying with the spoon.

"No? . . ." Looking up he saw that she was near tears. "Well, what's on your mind?"

She did not answer at once, but kept staring at her plate, her lips quivering. "I . . . I've been thinking all day," she said. "I feel terrible. I've been thinking that now I have ruined another home. It was all my fault. I begin to believe it was always my fault. What is the matter with me, Jan? You should never have taken up with me. I'll ruin you too."

"No, no . . ." He stretched his hand across the table and closed it around her nervous fingers. "Take it easy," he said. "I'm not worried. We'll be making out, you and me."

She sighed deeply, and her gaze wandered far.

Jan watched her tenderly. So she had begun to worry about the misfortune she'd brought to the men who loved her! Well, maybe not a bad sign. Maybe she would soon know that she had changed and was becoming a new person, one who no longer destroyed homes, but helped to build them.

He observed her secretly as she sat there across the table. She was nervous and trembling. But he felt confident in the outcome now.



KAREN WAS IN THIS DISTURBED FRAME OF MIND WHEN A few days later the post office forwarded a letter from her nephew. The boy was in South Africa and wrote that he had left his home in Norway against his father's will a year earlier. Things had not worked out any too well for him, but he didn't wish to return home and admit his failure. He was now looking for a chance to work his way to America, and wrote this letter to ask if he might visit his aunt when he came to New York.

Karen's spirit soared. She asked Jan what he thought about it, and he said she could do as she pleased. If she wanted her nephew to come and stay with them awhile, he'd be welcome.

So Karen sat down at once and wrote a reply. She had not seen her nephew since he was little, but described to Jan with pride what a fine-looking boy he used to be, and what wonderful parents he had, her brother-in-law being a learned professor at a big college, and all. And she described her sister's beautiful home on the rocky coast near the sea. All these things were brought back to her mind and seemed to bolster her prestige. Jan was satisfied. Anything that made her feel good was acceptable to him.

But as soon as Karen had dropped the letter in the mail box she suffered a change of heart. Jan was used to her sudden reversals of mood, yet now she really puzzled him. She looked tense and upset again, and grew worse by the day.

He soon learned what was troubling her, for the inner conflict grew unbearable and forced her to seek relief by telling him what was on her mind. It concerned her nephew. The moment she had mailed that letter she felt as though she opened wide the gates through which her past life could stream back upon her. And in that past fearful ghosts moved about. Arne would arrive here, and he would remind her of Norway and her youth. He had been a little boy when she and Bjorn returned from America—after she wrecked their American home. She recalled how Arne and young Bjorn had been very good friends, and how Bjorn used to pick the boy up on his powerful shoulders and romp around in the garden with him.

Her face showed the strain as the memories of her past life rose up before her. And these memories came clothed in a new understanding on her part, a terrible truth concerning the role she had played in the dismal drama that summer in her sister's cottage on the Norwegian coast. As though he had stood before her but a moment ago, she could remember young Bjorn pleading with her. "Two homes I have given you already," he had said and taken her hand. "Please, Karen, listen to me. Is your heart of stone? Can't you see how much I love you?"

And what cold answer had she given him: "It is me or your farm." And she remembered his saddened face as he stepped to the window and stood silently looking out into the sunny garden plot.

The memories! The memories! . . . And that dreadful autumn after he had sailed for America, when the rains fell and the storm howled among the rocks! . . . She covered her face with her hands and burst into bitter weeping, oblivious of the

trains that roared by the windows of her Ninth Avenue cold water flat.

And when Jan came home from the docks that night she was lying drunk on the bed.

Jan too received a letter at about that time—the customary letter from his mother in Bohemia, describing the work on the farm, and saying that she was getting old and kept hoping he would soon return home. She wrote that he would not recognize the village. Everything was so different since the new government had broken up the large estates and given the land to the poor. No more slaving for the German Baron. Now the peasants were free. “So many of our people come back from America,” she wrote. “And they never want to leave again. Every day I pray that you, too, will come. I always hope that one day you’ll surprise me and step inside the door.”

Nothing saddened Jan more than these frequent letters from his mother, and he knew no labor so hard as to answer them. He would never think of writing about his difficulties, for they belonged here to his American life, and he always solved his problems in the end. And many years ago he’d said all there was to say about his work. A ship docked. We unloaded. We loaded. Another ship . . . Yet his mother’s letters kept arriving regularly, as often as once a month sometimes. And she always begged him to reply soon. He was distracted. What could he write?

The letters continued coming—kept coming out of years gone. For what was the present to his mother was now the irrevocable past to him. His living present was here in America, here at the docks as he worked alongside Tony and Pat Mulligan and the rest—and here at Karen’s side.

After he had carried his mother’s letter around with him in his pocket a few weeks, Jan spent an evening toiling over a reply: A ship came in. We unloaded. We loaded . . .

Having sealed the envelope he walked into the kitchen

where Karen stood washing the dishes by the sink. He came from behind and put his arms around her and kissed her cheek. "Hello, mooney," he teased her. "How about a movie tonight?" For today was Sunday, and he was free.

Her expression brightened. "Oh, that would be fun!"

"Swell." He reached for a towel. "I'll dry the dishes. You go and get dressed."

"All right."

"And do you know what you can do when you feel like it one of these days? Look around for another place for us. Something nice. Pick a neighborhood you really like, for I've a feeling we'll be staying there a long time."

IT WOULD SEEM THAT ONLY WITH REGRET DID THE SEASON relinquish the beauty of late autumn days. Here it was far in December, and across the Hudson on Castle Point the trees had long ago been shorn of every summer leaf. Yet mild weather continued with sunshine and clear skies, hazy blue evenings and misty dawns.

But this dawdling could not continue forever. Storm warnings came. The shipping and weather page told of a blanket of cold air which spread over Minnesota, the Dakotas, Wisconsin, upper Michigan and Illinois, accompanied by temperatures of 15 to 20 degrees below zero. The cold wave was now headed east and south of the Midwest, threatening sub-zero temperatures along the whole Atlantic Coast.

And on the following night the plunge was taken suddenly into icy waters of winter time. At around midnight a storm blew up which came with a roar like an Elevated train rushing by in the dark, or like a fleet of trucks thundering along cobblestoned West Street. Freezing weather set in. When Jan came down to the dock in the morning the slip was full of ice, and icicles were hanging from the pier timbers after the tide had drawn back.

Then snows came. And winter was really here. The men stamped their feet as they stood shivering in the Shape while McGrady called his gangs, snow on their shoulders and caps. And the memory of little Freddie Reed came to them in the storm blast.

It was the season when fog horns trumpeted incessantly—lone calls from the sea, hoarse warnings out of wind-driven snow, barkings and lugubrious bellowings in the night.

Karen was sleeping badly. She tossed and turned in bed. She wished to God she had never written that letter to her nephew, wished she had never asked him to visit them. Lying awake she listened to the storm that came howling in from the ocean, and to the recurrent roar of the El-trains. And she stared into the darkness and was unable to stop the onrush of memories from the years that had gone. How much evil she had caused. How shallow she had been! How she had wasted her days!

Moaning, she turned her head on the pillow and tried to find forgetfulness in sleep. But sleep she could not. Night after night she lay awake, dreading Arne's visit, fearful of what he would say, of what incident in the past he would remind her.

Jan would sometimes come and sit on the edge of her bed and try to calm her. "Take it easy, kid," he would say. "You work yourself up. Everything will turn out right, you'll see."

His words soothed her, for she sensed his confidence. And she was filled with affection for him. What would she do without Jan? She would never want to leave him—never.

Then at last she fell asleep.

A FEW WEEKS PASSED. JAN WAS TRIED TO THE LIMIT OF his endurance, for Karen's dread of meeting her nephew grew to be a veritable obsession.

Again she got drunk. And the inevitable followed from all this nervous exhaustion. On getting home from the docks one evening Jan found Karen lying unconscious on the floor. She had been struck down by her invisible enemy while preparing supper, and had hurt her head and bruised herself when falling to the floor. On the stove were two pots with the blackened remains of spoiled food. The flat was full of suffocating smoke.

He flung the windows open to let in fresh air, lifted Karen from the floor and carried her to the bed. He wiped her lips with a towel, watching her pale drawn face stamped with the anguish which had harassed her for more than a month without respite. If only that nephew would arrive, he thought, then all this panic would pass. And if it came to the worst he would arrange for the boy to go and live somewhere else.

These things could be taken care of. But he had a more difficult problem to solve. It was Kelly who supplied Karen with liquor. Not that it would be difficult for her to get what she wanted—not these days when bootleggers crawled like vermin in every dim nook. But Kelly made it too easy for her.

And Jan suspected that Kelly tempted her at times when she otherwise would leave drink alone. His hatred for the man grew. Now looking at Karen's pale bruised face, his hatred for Kelly mounted to the point where he could go and kill the man in cold blood.

Then another letter from Karen's nephew, saying that the captain of a freighter had just signed him on to work for his passage to America. Jan kept in close touch with the shipping news the following week, and knew exactly when the steamer would dock.

He bought a cake to celebrate the boy's coming. Karen scrubbed the flat and did her best to make it presentable. But her heart sank as she looked around at the odds and ends of furniture from Jan's beloved "antique" store. She knew what Arne would think. And again, in anguish, her mind went back to her sister's home in Norway, that beautiful house with a sunny garden behind which the somber pine trees stood guard, and her brother-in-law's library facing the sea.

A jangling El-train hurtled by the windows. Karen pressed her handkerchief in her nervous damp hands and turned to Jan who sat waiting on the sofa, stiff and uncomfortable, dressed in his good clothes. But he nodded reassuringly. "Don't worry. There's nothing for you to worry about."

She twisted the handkerchief, haunted by her past life and humiliated by memories of selfishness and vanity. How much would Arne recall of it? . . . Her conscience was tormented by guilt as she thought of that kindly young man who had been her husband—oh, so long ago! How unworthy she had been of him! . . . What would Arne have to say about it all?

She sat tensely in the chair, alert to every slight sound outside the door. And in her overwrought mind it seemed as if the visitor would be her own selfish and arrogant youth taken bodily shape to confront her.

"It will soon be over," Jan said. But he knew that he could



not comfort her. Only wait until it was over, until the bell had been pressed and Karen had faced the boy and asked him in.

"There! . . ." She sat up straight, listening to footsteps out on the stairs. Her eyes were haunted and dark. But the heavy steps of a man stopped on the floor-landing below. A door opened and closed. It was only their Italian neighbor Gatti returning from work.

An hour passed. And one more. Still Jan and Karen were waiting for the boy. Evening now. Lamplit El-trains roared by out there like thousand-eyed dragons.

"I hate him," Karen said passionately, after she had turned on the light and gone back to her chair. "Why is he coming here? I hate him."

"Listen, take it easy," said Jan. "The kid has been traveling a long way. Be fair and wait until you've seen him."

She tugged at the damp handkerchief. Jan knew very well that her hatred for the boy was born of her fear of him. For do we not reserve our deepest hatred for that which we fear? What we fear we hate, and then we want to destroy it, hoping for escape, only to be more haunted than ever before.

They waited. Then once more footsteps were heard out on the stairs. And this time they proceeded up the third flight. . . . Karen was listening, breathless. The steps came to a halt out on the landing! The bell rang!

She sprang to her feet. "Oh, God Almighty!" she gasped under her breath. "There he is now! Jan, please, you open the door."

"No, open it yourself," he said gently. "You've got to face him. Pull yourself together now and be nice to him. The kid hasn't done you any harm."

She steeled herself, her gray eyes narrowed, her face set. When the bell rang a second time she stepped slowly from the room, through the gas-lit kitchen, and turned the key in the

lock. She pulled the door back, giving a start when she saw a tall lean youth in crumpled clothes standing out in the hall.

Her hand still clutching the knob she scrutinized the face of her sister Louise's son. With a catch at her heart she saw that the boy looked so much like his mother—that same cast of features, those eyes, the shape of his mouth. And for a moment she forgot her fears, and remembered the grace and warmth of Louise, and the days of her own youth when all the world was hers. "My own flesh and blood!" she cried, stretched out her arms and embraced the boy. Then embarrassment chilled her, the fear of him returned, and her arms dropped to her sides.

The boy hesitantly entered the kitchen, looking up at the sound of Jan's footsteps coming from the inner room.

Karen made a nervous gesture. "This is Jan . . ."

Jan smiled and offered his hand, and Arne's tired face lighted up. But now as his eyes swept around the room his puzzled expression returned.

Jan observed the young visitor closely in the pale light of the gas jet.

Arne turned to him as if apologizing for making trouble. Then he glanced at his aunt and seemed bewildered at her hostile attitude.

"Come in and sit down," said Jan, walking ahead into the living room. As the boy took off his coat Jan exchanged a long look with Karen, much as if to say: "See . . . What are you afraid of? He's just a nice kid."

WHATEVER HARDSHIPS ARNE HAD GONE THROUGH SINCE he left his Norwegian home, he never spoke of them. When he decided to work at the docks Karen's pride received a blow. She failed to change the boy's mind, however. And after Jan put in a good word with the Stevedore, Arne was taken on at the pier.

He had no immediate plans. He thought he would stay in New York awhile, then return to Norway as he had promised his parents. Jan took a great liking to the boy, and Arne responded in kind, but it was evident that he didn't like his aunt. Jan had hoped Karen would get over her nervous fear when the boy arrived and she had seen him and talked to him. This she didn't do. Matters were getting worse instead of better. Arne's very presence seemed to throw Karen out of balance, and Arne resented her unjust hostility, and was shocked when she got drunk. They were constantly at each other's throats. "I knew it would be like this," Karen said to Jan, not aware that her own fears had brought the situation about.

Some time after Arne started working on the pier Jan learned that Nils' barge had tied up over at its customary mooring place. So in the evening he suggested that Arne and he go down to see Nils.

Arne was all for it, and they started off. It was a cold night, with snow and wind and a continuous bellowing from snow-bound ships out at sea. "Remember to say something nice to Tyra," Jan said when they reached the dark pier. "He's crazy about that little dog."

The river was filled with ice floes pushing at the wooden piles of the pier. The barge could hardly be distinguished in the dark, but a warm light glowed in the tiny cabin window, obscured now and then by a cloud of fine-grained snow. "Don't make any noise," said Jan as they approached the barge. "Let's see if we can't fool Tyra this time."

Still she heard them, although they walked on tiptoe, and in spite of storm and grinding ice. She set up a howl that brought Nils to the door.

"Hello," Jan called to him out of the snow flurry. "It's only us."

"Come right in," the bargeman replied, and stood back to let them enter and shake the snow off their coats. Tyra was torn between two equally strong emotions—one to warn Arne, the newcomer; the other to greet her old friend Jan. She solved the problem by barking like a jungle beast while wagging her fluffy tail amiably.

"The tail-wagging is for me," Jan grinned.

"And the bark for me," Arne said, trying to appease the excitable little animal. "Friend, friend," he cooed.

Straddling her legs little Tyra indignantly repulsed such familiarity. Friend nothing. She howled.

But after Nils had demonstrated that he accepted Arne, and that the fellow by no means intended to run away with the barge—well, Tyra grudgingly toned down the bark to a growl. She kept an eye on the boy, however. She knew her duties, and she wasn't one to be caught napping. Not she.

Nils had been reading as usual, and Arne became very interested when he found the book to be on a philosophical subject. "That is what I hope to teach some day," he said.

"Really! . . ." A keen look came into Nils' seaman-blue eyes. "Then we must talk," he said eagerly, and at once began to question Arne in regard to this philosophical problem and that. Their discussion grew very animated, and although Jan understood nothing of what they said, he sat back in quiet triumph at having brought these two together.

Then in alarm he heard Nils express deep disapproval of something Arne was saying. Leaning forward he tried to follow their argument. "No, no," said Nils. "I refuse to believe that human beings are driven only by circumstance."

Arne defended his position with energy. "The laws of the universe are iron-hard," he said, with the dramatic pessimism of youth. "Every one of our actions has been determined long before we were born."

"No," said Nils, with a heat that surprised Jan. "You mean to say that man is no more than a piece of driftwood floating down a stream?"

"You believe that man is the master of his fate and the captain of his soul?" Arne said ironically.

Nils showed no resentment, but a flush came to his cheek. This was evidently a subject on which he felt deeply. "I would be foolish if I thought so," he answered. "Still there is something in between a bit of flotsam and a ship's captain."

Arne didn't seem certain of what Nils meant. The bargeman began to explain. "You have studied the new physics?" he said.

"Ye-es . . ."

"Good. I think science is beginning to find proof that there is such a thing as free will in the world."

"How do you mean?"

Nils tried to make himself clear. He explained the findings of the new physical science, and was flushed and eager as Jan had never before seen him. "For so long now the world has been ruled by this mechanistic philosophy. And what have we?—A gadget-crazy junk civilization. Humanity worshipping the machine. But man is not a mechanism. Our will is small,

perhaps, and we have all the forces in the universe to contend with. But we are not helpless victims of fate. God created creators. So let us will what is great and good."

He had talked himself warm. His hand trembled slightly as he bent down to pat little brown-eyed Tyra who seemed to hang on to his every word. Jan sat silent and somber-faced over on the bunk, for the latter part of Nils' monologue he had followed well enough.

Arne was about to answer when Tyra growled threateningly as if hearing a suspicious sound from out in the dark river.

Nils hushed her. "Be quiet. That is only the wind you hear."

Tyra's reproachful eyes seemed to say: "Did you ever know me to be wrong?" She flipped her ears viciously. Sitting back on her haunches, she howled for all she was worth.

"Must be something out there, after all," Nils muttered, peering through the cabin window. He could see nothing in the snowy river, however. The moaning of the wind was all he could hear.

But as Tyra continued barking he opened the door and looked out. Tyra took one leap out in the dark, protesting vigorously at goings on that outraged her sense of order and peace. And then things began to happen. Standing in the doorway, Nils heard a man's rough voice from somewhere in the stream. "Damn that dog!" he swore. "The goddamned fool!"

There came a loud thud against the side of the barge as if a craft bumped against it. More swearing followed. Tyra yelled. And now a policeman's whistle screamed over on the dock. Jan and Arne hurried to the door, reaching it just in time to see four obscure figures crawl up on the pier and run off in the snow flurry and the dark. The whistle screamed again. Another whistle shrieked over in West Street. A shot was fired.

"Come inside," Nils whispered, grabbed hold of the screaming Tyra, carried her into the cabin and closed the door. "Now

what was that racket?" he said to Jan. "That boat and that shooting?"

"Think I have an idea."

"Yes . . . I know."

They were listening for more sounds from out in the night, yet only the wind was heard, and the snow pelting the window-panes.

But a few minutes later heavy steps approached on the pier, and someone banged at the door. Before Nils had time to turn around the door was pulled open, and a red-faced policeman bustled inside. He stared hard at Jan and Arne, then relaxed and nodded to Nils. "How are you? Just wanted to make sure everything is okay here."

"What's up?" said Nils, trying to quiet Tyra who once more was attending to duty.

"Almost nabbed a couple of rumrunners," the policeman said, picking up Tyra from the floor, and teasing her. "Don't like cops, eh?" he guffawed. "You little rascal.—Yeah," he said to Nils. "They got away, but their boat is alongside out there. Full o' whisky. Tried to run it ashore, I guess. But it didn't pan out."

"The dog scared them off," Nils put in, with a proud smile.

"So that's it! Sure, I heard a dog raising hell. Well, well! . . ." He held the snapping Tyra at arm's length for everyone to see and admire. He allowed her to chew his big forefinger, and Tyra made the most of her opportunity, though the finger was too tough for her. "Biting the law, eh?" the policeman grinned. "Well, a good dog, anyhow. Ought to get a medal for this."

He put her down on the floor. "Okay," he said to Nils. "I gotta see to that boat. I'll be around tomorrow."

A long silence followed after the policeman left. Nils made an effort to continue the interrupted discussion, but nothing came of it. The policeman's whistle and that pistol shot had broken the spell.

ARNE HAD BEEN WORKING AT THE DOCKS FOR ABOUT A month when he received a letter from Norway—one with black edges and his father's handwriting on the envelope. He nervously tore it open and glanced at the page, then turned to Jan with a stunned look. "Mother is dead," he said in a barely audible voice.

"Dead!"

"Yes . . . mother is dead! . . ."

Jan awkwardly tried to comfort the boy, but Arne did not hear. For as he continued reading his father's letter he was tormented by self-reproach. Certain circumstances regarding his mother suddenly became clear to him—things he had not understood when he was home. His father alluded to a long malignant illness which finally brought Arne's mother to her end. And in a flash of comprehension the boy looked back on the past few years.—Was that the reason she often seemed so pale and fragile! He with his boyish lightheartedness had taken his mother's appearance for granted, thought she was thus delicate by nature and loved her the more for it. But now he knew why he so often came upon her sitting alone, brooding with her sewing in her lap. And when he used to burst into her room she would glance up with a melancholy smile and pass



her hand over his hair. . . . Now he understood. And now he knew the meaning of those whispered conversations between his mother and his father. And their grave looks. And he knew the reason for their frequent trips to the Capital, times when he used to storm and protest because not allowed to come along.

But beyond anything now, and with excruciating torment, he understood why his mother had been so averse to his leaving home, why until the last day she begged him to stay—and when he stubbornly insisted on going, why she exacted from him the promise to return within a year. It was a year and two months now. His eyes filled with tears. She had known then that her time would be short! Perhaps the doctor had warned her. Still she did not want to tell her boy. Wished to spare him the anxiety. Only pleaded with him to stay.

And now she was gone. It seemed unbelievable to him that the light could ever have been extinguished in such mild sweet eyes as those of his mother. Or that her gentle voice would never speak to him again. It seemed cruel that the slight and delicate body of his mother should be lowered into the cold ground of the cemetery on the hill, where the winter storms blew in from the Atlantic.

He buried his face in his hands. The El-train roared by the windows out on the snowy tracks, and it sounded in his ears like the unmerciful voice of life itself.—She was dead! Gone—forever and ever . . .

And for Karen also the news of her sister's death came as a great shock. In her excitable state of mind she felt that now the last tie with her youth was cut off. There had been five sisters in the family. Two of them were dead, and the oldest of them many years ago haughtily severed all relations with her wayward sister Karen. Arne's mother alone remained loyal to her. Louise was tolerant when all others condemned her. And to Karen, wherever she strayed and in whatever difficult

predicament she found herself, the memory of her gentle sister Louise had always been like the knowledge of one quiet harbor in a sea of turbulence and storms.—Now that too was swept away.

And she thought with inward trembling of how terribly alone she would now have been without Jan.

In the evening Karen left the house secretly, her coat wrapped around her, for a cold wind came sweeping in from the sea. She went to the nearby Church of Our Lady and lighted a candle to Louise's memory. Although born and reared a Protestant she had never given thought to religion. But Jan was a Catholic, and she gropingly began to reach for the things he believed in.

She knelt before the flickering candles in the dim church. Here no one knew her. No one to see what she did. And she bent her head and prayed for the peace of Louise's soul.

ARNE MUST NOW DECIDE WHAT TO DO. SHOULD HE RETURN to Norway as his father bade him in the letter?—"You ought to come home and enroll in the University and prepare yourself for your calling. Youth is a time for preparation, and you have already wasted a year. It is my duty as your father to point out that this is a mistake you will regret later on. . . ."

He put the letter down. The gulf that had always separated him from his austere father had widened. This voice, which spoke to him from the letter, he well remembered—the voice of a man whose life was irreproachable, a man devoted to duty and the highest principles as he saw them, but a man with little warmth. Arne recalled how that severe voice used to ring out in his father's study, or occasionally on a Sunday walk among the rocks. One such walk he remembered particularly well, a gray morning up among the cliffs, with the battling Atlantic invisible far below in the fog, and screaming gulls in the wind. Turning his lined scholar's face toward the sea his father spoke gravely. Arne was sixteen then. "Man must exercise reason and decide coolly what part he is going to play in life. Once you have made your choice, my son, walk your path upright and look neither to the one side nor the other. Allow

no one and nothing to turn you from your duty or your goal. And harden yourself to suffer pain. Man must endure the vicissitudes of life, the loss of all he holds dear, the loss of those he loves—yet remain unbowed. The rains may fall, the storms blow, and misfortune strike. But man must walk down the years allotted to him by his God.”

Arne sat with the letter in his hand. And he decided not to go back. Now that his adored mother had passed away there was nothing to which he wanted to return. For the time being he would stay here and work at the docks.

But as the weeks wore on it became clear to him that his presence was a constant source of irritation to Karen, and he knew that as long as he remained in the house he would defeat Jan's purpose. That he did not wish, for he had learned something during his short stay here, had learned from Jan not to judge thoughtlessly and not to condemn. And he had learned to respect another's personality and life.

So one day he talked things over with Jan and said he would go to live somewhere else. He realized that Karen needed a complete sense of security and must be free of the fear that her past life would rise up against her. He would say to Karen that he was leaving New York to go far away. That would give her peace. But unknown to her he would live in another part of the city, and Jan and he could meet whenever they wished, and continue their friendship.

Jan seemed greatly relieved, and agreed that Arne's plan sounded good. A week later Arne said goodbye to his aunt who was taken aback by his sudden decision to leave. And now when every reason to fear him was unexpectedly removed from her she felt remorseful for having treated him so unkindly. After all, was he not the son of Louise! Her own flesh and blood! . . . She wept. Even the boy felt moved, for he sensed Karen's anguish and knew that her regret was sincere. Still it would be best for everyone concerned that he go. And

so he left forever that old tumble-down house by the Ninth Avenue El.

Karen's spirits improved as soon as Arne left. Yet though the storm died down within her, the seas were still running high.

# GREETINGS FROM CHARLIE.

Jan got quite a jolt. He had just come home from work, snow powdering his coat and cap, and he stared bewildered at the card Karen handed him. Then he stared moodily at *her*.—Again! What had she done now?

Karen looked perfectly innocent. But she was suspicious. “Who is that Charlie?” she asked. “Lots of greetings he’s sending you. Or maybe it’s a she?”

“It’s a he,” he said weakly, still with the card in his hand.

“Well, you don’t seem to get much of a kick hearing from him.”

“No . . . well, it’s only that I’ve got to go back to the pier tonight,” he lied, gazing regretfully toward the window. The snow was piled high on the sill out there.

“How’s that?”

“Overtime,” he said, avoiding her eyes.

“Overtime? . . . But you never used to come home at six when you work overtime?”

“It’s different tonight,” he said, continuing to lie. “The boss said for me to come down at around eight o’clock. He might need me. If there’s nothing doing I’ll be right back.”

Karen didn’t seem to believe him. Still his story sounded

credible enough. So she served supper. After that was eaten Jan sat in the front room and twiddled his thumbs for an hour, while morosely watching the El-trains hurtling by at regular intervals out on the tracks.

At seven-thirty he bundled himself up in the warmest clothing he could find. "Well, so long," he said to Karen and gave her a peculiar glance. "I'll be on my way."

Her puzzled gaze followed him. What was he up to? Why, he looked scared! She wondered if it had something to do with that mysterious Charlie, after all.

Lizzie was waiting for him under the canopy at the ferry house, she too wrapped up in all sorts of odds and ends under Kelly's fur coat, her teeth chattering in the cold. She took a wobbly step forward as Jan came out of the whirling snow. And with a gasp and a half-suppressed sob she threw herself at his breast.

"Lizzie, what is it?" he said with mounting anxiety. "What's happened? Tell me."

And for once Lizzie didn't waste time on extravagant digressions. She came right to the point. "Kelly's been nabbed!" she whimpered, heartbroken. "Uh-huh! Blub-blub! . . ." And she sniffled and wept out her misery on Jan's snowy breast.

His face was very still. He stood breathless and dumb, hardly aware of either Lizzie or her weeping, and forgetting both time and place before this enormous event.

Then he gave a start. What was that shriek? . . . Oh, nothing but a tug out in the stream. "What did you say?" he turned to the blubbering Lizzie, as though he could not believe his own ears. "Kelly . . . he's nabbed, you say?"

"They took him away," she sobbed, and blew her nose. "The cops caught him. Jan, he's a goner this time. He'll get five or ten years if he gets a day, believe me. He'd grand idears, Kelly had, but everything went to pot for him. Oh, my God!"

Jan patted her awkwardly. He tried to think of sympathetic

words to console poor Lizzie, but he wasn't enough of a hypocrite. Her misfortune was his great luck, indeed. He felt like throwing his cap into the air and shouting with joy.

Lizzie gave way to another burst of despair. Everything had gone wrong for Kelly, but so much had gone wrong for her too. And now all her misery pressed for an outlet. She paid no heed to the snow on Jan's breast; her tears were hot enough to melt the icy heart of the universe. She was not old in years as people go, but she'd fallen upon cold and wintry days. She had no more spring to look forward to, and neither summer nor glad hours. Nothing but loneliness for herself, and ten years for Kelly in that gray building up at Ossining.

She cried and she blubbered, and Jan threw an embarrassed glance about him. People heading for the ferry stared at him and Lizzie. The two of them made an odd pair, Jan in his long-shoreman's garb, and little Lizzie wrapped in Kelly's fur coat. "Take it easy now," he tried to quiet her. "Lizzie . . . he might get out sooner than you think." And with sudden inspiration, he added, "He needs you now. More than ever Kelly needs you."

She raised her head, and took a deep breath. His words had found their mark. She gazed with awe into the snow that swirled within range of the lamplight. "Lordy me, an' you're right," she cried in a hushed voice. "Jan, I always said you're a darlin' boy, and you are. You can think of more sweet things to say than anybody I know, an' that's a fact."

Her tears came again, a tumultuous flood of them that wrenched her frail frame. She coughed and pounded her chest, but now she sobbed with almost hysterical joy. "'Course he needs me!" she cried. "And I'm going to stand by him, I am, for Lizzie is one who stands by her friends. It's Lizzie who's made the sacrifices, an' it's Lizzie who's paid the price, but Lizzie's got it in her to sacrifice some more. I'll show the world! I'll wait for him until they let him out again, an' the gates swing wide. And I mean that, even if the bastards keep him



locked up in their filthy hole until the day before I die. Sing Sing be damned! Kelly's got a friend in old Lizzie, even if he hasn't always appreciated her in the past!"

"That's right, Lizzie," said Jan, feeling quite weak before this ecstatic dedication to one he felt was nothing but a cheap crook. However, if this devotion would help little frowsy Lizzie live through her bleak days ahead, far be it from him to pull the support from her.

"I know it's right," she said. "I feel it in my heart, I do. God's ways are indeed wonderful! And anyway, now Kelly is where no damn bitch can get at him. Praise be unto the Lord's name! Amen."

JAN WAS VERY HAPPY DURING THE WINTER THAT FOLLOWED, for Karen made great strides toward health. Not that this progress was unbroken by any means. To an outsider she would seem a pretty but irascible woman with all too frequent ups-and-downs.

Yet her inner conflicts were being resolved and showed a constant lessening in violence. During these months Karen's mental state was like a turbulent mountain stream falling down the cliffs, and halting now and then at a quiet lake. Each plunge was an outburst of her unrest. And after each plunge there followed the calm of the lake. Before Jan fully understood what was happening he believed that now with this calm, at last she had won peace. But no. Suddenly the stream hurled itself down another precipice, and it would seem as if Karen were as badly off as ever before. Yet that was not true. For soon the stream reached another lake and there followed another period of tranquillity. And Jan learned that the downward plunges became increasingly shorter; and the quiet intervals longer and more pronounced. Some day the stream would find its full peace in the sea.

One thing Dr. Thomas had said which Jan believed with all his heart—that Karen would fare best fully occupied. Jan knew

the healing value of work. He knew well enough that he might feel distracted and wrought up of a morning as he left the house, after Karen had spent a sleepless night. But as soon as he shaped up outside the dock gates the hurry on the pier absorbed all his energies, and he found no time to brood. So when he returned home at night he might be tired out physically, yet his mind was ready to tackle almost anything.

And he knew that what was true for himself applied to Karen also. Idleness is a great foe to peace of mind. Not that Karen didn't find enough to do in their "elevator flat," as he humorously referred to it. Dust would blow in from the tracks and fill the rooms if she but opened the windows for a minute. And no matter how often she scrubbed and cleaned, that sunless cold water flat never looked like a home. He detested the place. And he didn't believe that this sort of occupation could do Karen much good. He wished they'd move once more, and now for the last time. He wanted them to live in some decent neighborhood where Karen could make a really nice home for them.

He'd come to a point now where he no longer insisted on living on the waterfront. Anywhere would be all right with him, if only Karen found peace and health there. So he spoke to her about it. And she agreed. She was so utterly tired of their Ninth Avenue flat. Yes, she'd look around for a new place. And it would be like making a fresh start, free from past conflicts and unhappiness.

THEY MADE THEIR HOME ON THE WATERFRONT, AFTER all. The choice was Karen's own. She had looked around elsewhere, but for one reason or other found nothing she liked. Strange experience! The Village was out, of course. She had come to hate that neighborhood of pretense even more intensely than Jan did. She wanted to build her life on solid foundations now. No more make-believe. No more pose, and no more attitudes.

So at last, one lovely spring afternoon she found herself walking down to the waterfront. Her mood was so light and gay that day, the sky so blue, and the sunshine so warm. And high in the air white seagulls were wheeling far inland, while they screamed and called to another. Yes, she liked it here. No forbidding walls to hem you in, and no El-trains to roar by the windows. And when she asked directions from a couple of stout Irish longshoremen they touched their caps and gave her a courteous reply.

The flat she decided on was not located directly on West Street, for the constant rumbling of trucks proved too much for her. But she found three nice rooms in one of the side streets. The house was somewhat higher than the other older houses around it, and from the windows you had a marvelous

view of the Hudson, now flashing blue in the spring sun. She thought Jan would like to sit there and watch the river traffic in his free time—watch the ships coming and going, and those funny-looking tugboats always so busy, and always yapping and making a great to-do.

Jan could hardly believe his ears when Karen came home and told him of her choice. He sank down in a chair and gaped at her as if he'd won a million dollar sweepstakes.

They moved into their new home on a Saturday, when Jan had the whole day free. After they had put things in order it was still early in the evening, but Karen felt tired, and went to her room.

Jan was tired himself, so he lay down and fell asleep nearly at once. His last conscious impression was that of a steamer calling off the coast.

He woke early the next morning. And it appeared as if Karen too were awake, for he thought he heard her move about in her room. Otherwise the Sunday morning was without sound. A soft gray mist hovered above the river out there—sky, water and shoreline melting into one, with the dim outlines of a shadowy ship floating weightless, as it were, in the haze.

Then his attention was arrested by a sound over at the door. The knob turned. The door was slowly pushed open, and he saw Karen, white and slim in the half-light. She lingered on the threshold for a moment, looking toward his bed. And without knowing why, he pretended to be asleep. But his pulse started to beat fast and furiously, for he remembered how once before, when he first knew her, she had come to him in the night. And he remembered the pain and conflict which followed. Now . . . she was coming once more! What did it mean? For so long he had avoided the fire which seared him. And he had been able to build up so much of good for Karen and himself. Now! . . . What would happen?

She came across the floor and stood by the side of his bed,

her hands to her breast. And with half-closed eyes he saw that her face was stamped with a strong emotion. She called his name softly: "Jan . . . Jan, are you asleep?"

He looked up, and rose on his elbow. "You," he said. "Karen . . . you awake so early?"

"I couldn't sleep," she said, a catch in her voice. "Jan . . . I want to talk to you about something." She lifted the corner of the blanket and laid herself down by his side, burying her face at his breast as if seeking refuge from some thought that haunted her.

"What is it?" he said soothingly. "Tell me."

"Yes . . . I must," she said with a sob. "I must speak to you, Jan. I will never get peace until I speak to you."

He was silent, fearing what would follow. She might speak a word now that would make all of his proud work come tumbling down.

"It is . . . something I did once," she faltered. "To you."

"To me?"

"Yes. When we first met." She wept silently, then continued speaking. "Jan, I . . . I want to be really honest with you about everything. I want you to trust me from now on."

He drew her closer to him.

"But first the slate must be wiped clean," she went on, her voice growing firmer now. "Sometimes . . . oh, I'm afraid that I might wreck another home—this one. I have ruined so many, Jan. But I couldn't help myself. Still I have changed, don't you think so?"

"Of course," he murmured. "Of course."

"Yes, and . . . Jan . . . I do care for you a lot, you know that, don't you?"

"If you say so," he said gravely.

"Oh, you know it. But . . . Jan, I want to confess what I did to you once."

"What is it?"

"I'll tell you. Only, don't be angry with me. It was when we first met. I don't know if you remember. I . . . I said that I cared for you. . . . But it wasn't true. Not then. Oh, Jan, say that you forgive me. I was so up against everything. I didn't know what to do."

"Well, of course," he said heavily, "I knew you didn't care."

"You knew!"

"Yes, yes," he said, with a sigh, for her words called up the unhappy memories of those first months when she continually plunged him in despair.

"But if you knew—why did you let me stay?" she asked, wondering.

"Because you needed me. You had no place to go. And then . . . well, I fell in love with you."

She remained silent, looking into the dim morning light.

"But the past is gone," he resumed. "Let's forget about it."

"You forgive me then?"

"Forgive! Why speak about it that way. I've forgiven you long ago."

Another pause followed. Then Karen said, "Jan, there's one thing more.—I've been thinking. . . . Wouldn't you have been happier if you had gone back to Bohemia . . . and . . . and married that girl?"

"No," he said firmly. "No, it would've been a mistake all around."

And as her silence showed that she did not quite understand, he continued: "I've been away from my folks for seventeen years. Do you realize how much people change in that time? I never thought of it until you said that . . . it was only her memory I loved. But it was true. I always used to think of her as a little girl. But she's a grown woman now. I wouldn't recognize her. She wouldn't recognize me. It would break our hearts."

He stopped talking. Outside the morning light changed

from gray to a faint blue. The ship could be seen clearly now, with tall straight masts in the stream.

"No," he said, his eyes following the contour of her white arm, "it would be a mistake to go back. It wouldn't do anyone any good."

"Perhaps you're right," she said slowly. "I wouldn't want to go back myself . . . even if I could.—So I won't reproach myself for that, at least."

"Reproach yourself! How you talk! Life was dull before I met you. Always lonesome. I hate to think of it."

Silence again. Far beyond the waterside and the city, far in the east the sun rose and a bright light struck the Hoboken piers. The mist was shot through with a golden shaft. A seagull winged her way high in the sunlit atmosphere.

"Jan . . ."

"Yes?" he said gently.

"Jan . . . I feel so safe with you."

"I'm glad." He pressed her arm.

"I always used to feel so . . . so torn inside," she added, moving closer to him. "So restless . . . Always had to be on the go. But . . . I've peace now."

"That is good," he said. "That's good, Karen. Always come and talk to me when you feel you need to."

The sun rose higher in the sky, and the light reached the river and flashed on the ocean-borne tide.







Swedish-American author, his first with an American setting. The background is the many-mooded Hudson River, upon whose banks soar the towers of Manhattan. The story is of Jan, a husky young longshoreman, who has come here from Bohemia, leaving behind him a girl to whom he plans to return. But that is before the misty morning when, returning from night work on the Chelsea docks, he picks up the golden-haired Karen.

Fascinating, beautiful but erratic, Karen has seen better days. Yet she comes to lean upon Jan—not because she loves him or ever expects to, but because she is so desperately alone. At first awed by her beauty and the mystery that surrounds her, before long Jan has fallen in love with her, caught as other men before him by her physical loveliness. The twists in her nature cause her to deceive and abuse him. Jan has endless patience and faith, however, and in the end his faith is justified. Karen is awakened from her “strange sleep.”

As a longshoreman, Jan earns their living on the docks, and the workaday waterfront is described with forcible realism. The reader will “shape up” with the men in the morning, rain or shine. He will feel the whip of anxiety as the boss stevedore picks the men for the day’s work that means food for their families—or passes them by.

Throughout the book rolls the ancient, tidal Hudson, ebbing and flowing with the pulse beats of the sea. Here are bitter winter blizzards when stormbound ships bellow offshore; and here are magic spring evenings when gentle winds blow and lanterned craft nose up and down the stream. Here also is a love story of healing power, simple, human, with the inexplicable quality of life.

---

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



134 174

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY